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— 2025 —
GUIDE
— to the —
GREAT
OUTDOORS

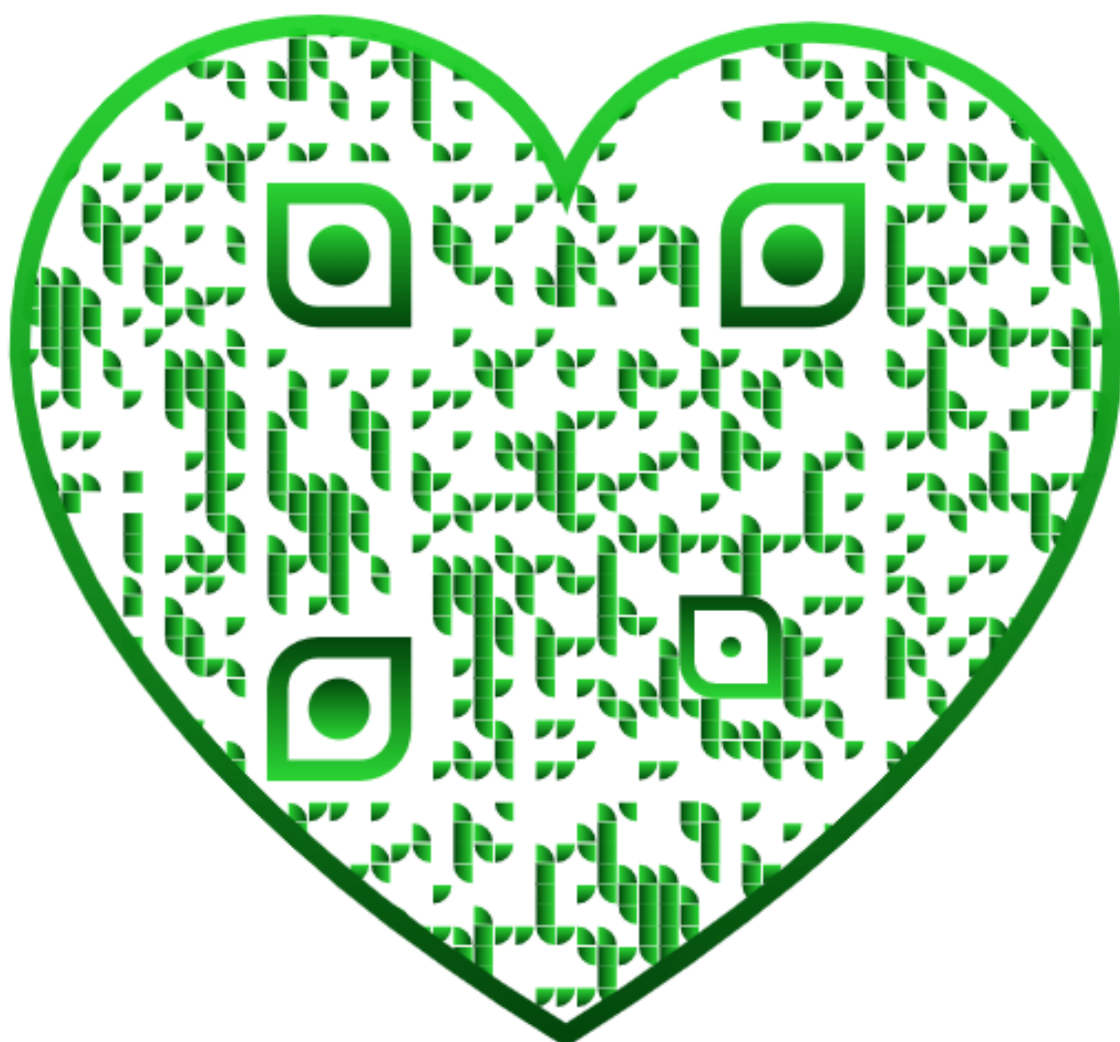
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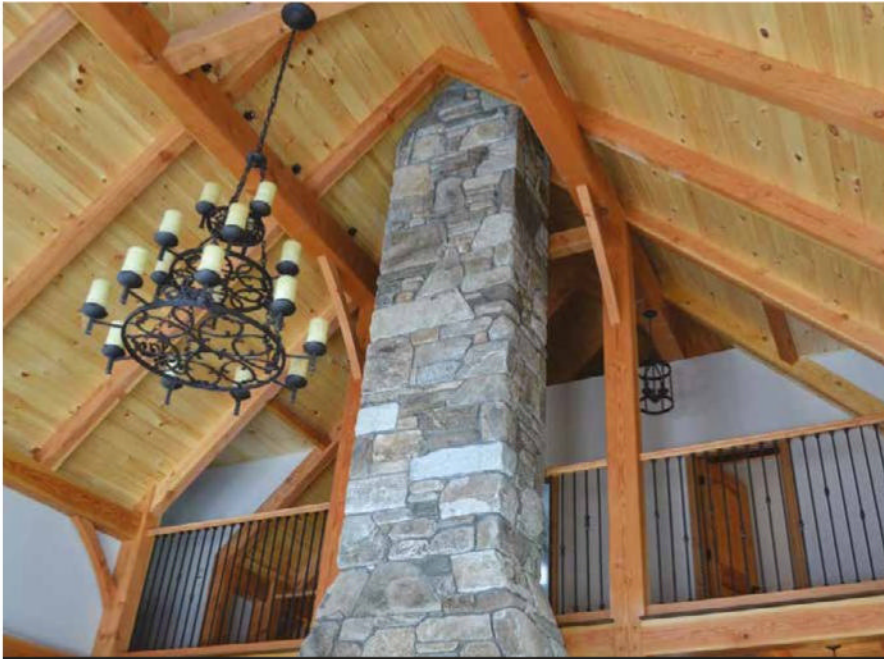
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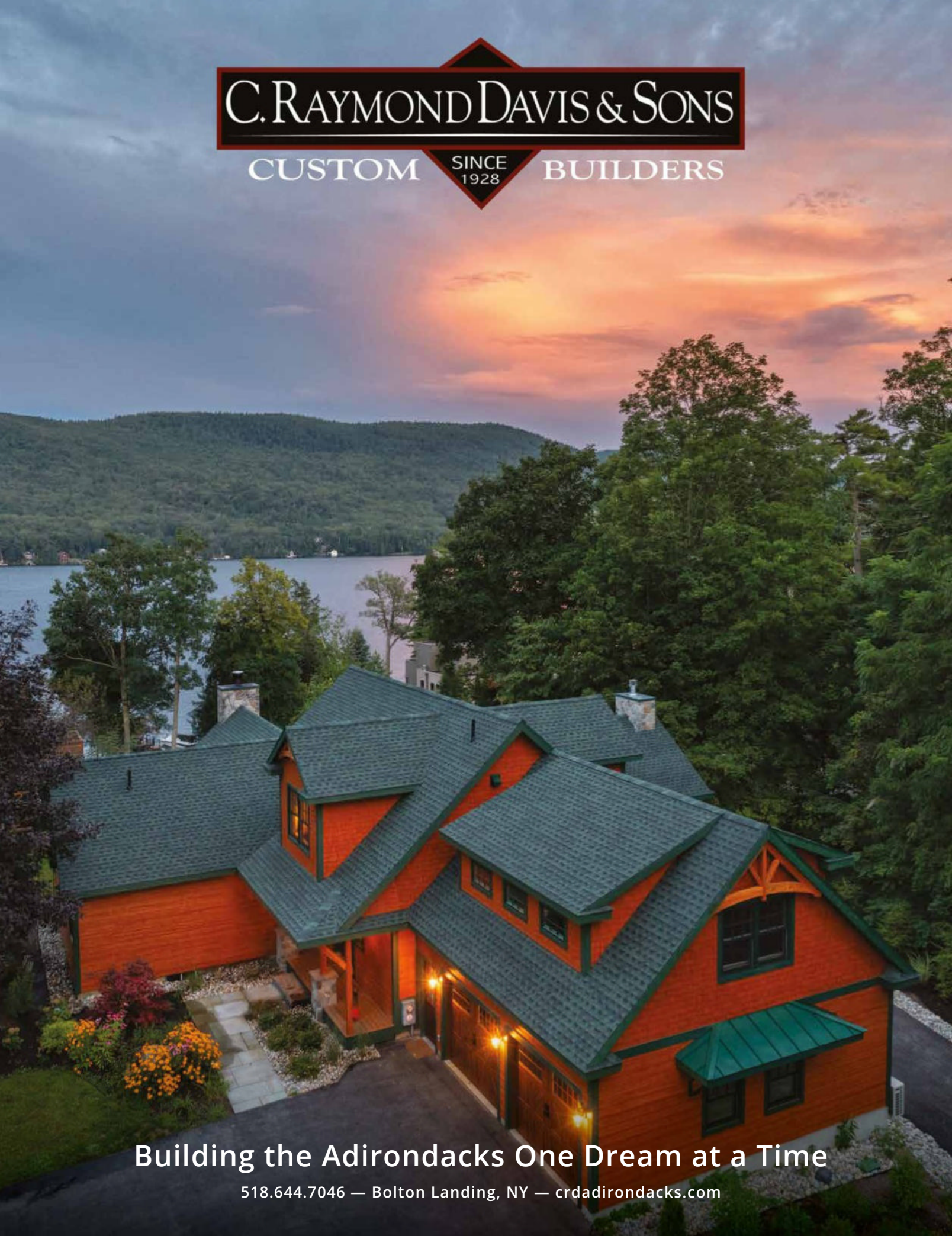
What I love about this issue, our latest *Guide to the Great Outdoors*, is that its stories and photographs are about designing our own fun. The Adirondack Park is, after all, a six-million-acre playground, with more wild country than Yellowstone, Yosemite and Glacier National Parks combined. The possibilities are endless.

Thank goodness. Now more than ever we need a place where we can escape a chaotic and complicated world.

Read on. Adventure on. And between all the fun, let me know how you "Adirondack"—it just might pop up in next year's *Outdoor Guide*.

—Annie Stoltie

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New Frontier

A fresh start for North Hudson's abandoned theme park

BY TIM ROWLAND

It sounded so plausible on paper. The State of New York would pump 32 million life-giving dollars into the petrified veins of a long-dead Wild West theme park, creating a bustling commercial center to which ecotourists would flock from around the world. Matter of fact, a goodly number of people might forget all about the glitz of Lake Placid and instead come to North Hudson (population 200).

Or maybe it wasn't so plausible after all.

It's been more than eight years since then-Governor Andrew Cuomo unveiled the Adirondack Gateway proposal, a 288-acre "world-class" attraction that would transform a lonely interstate exit into a year-round, one-stop-shop for hikers, horseback riders and snowmobilers, where travelers could choose from a bevy of restaurants, hotels, concerts,

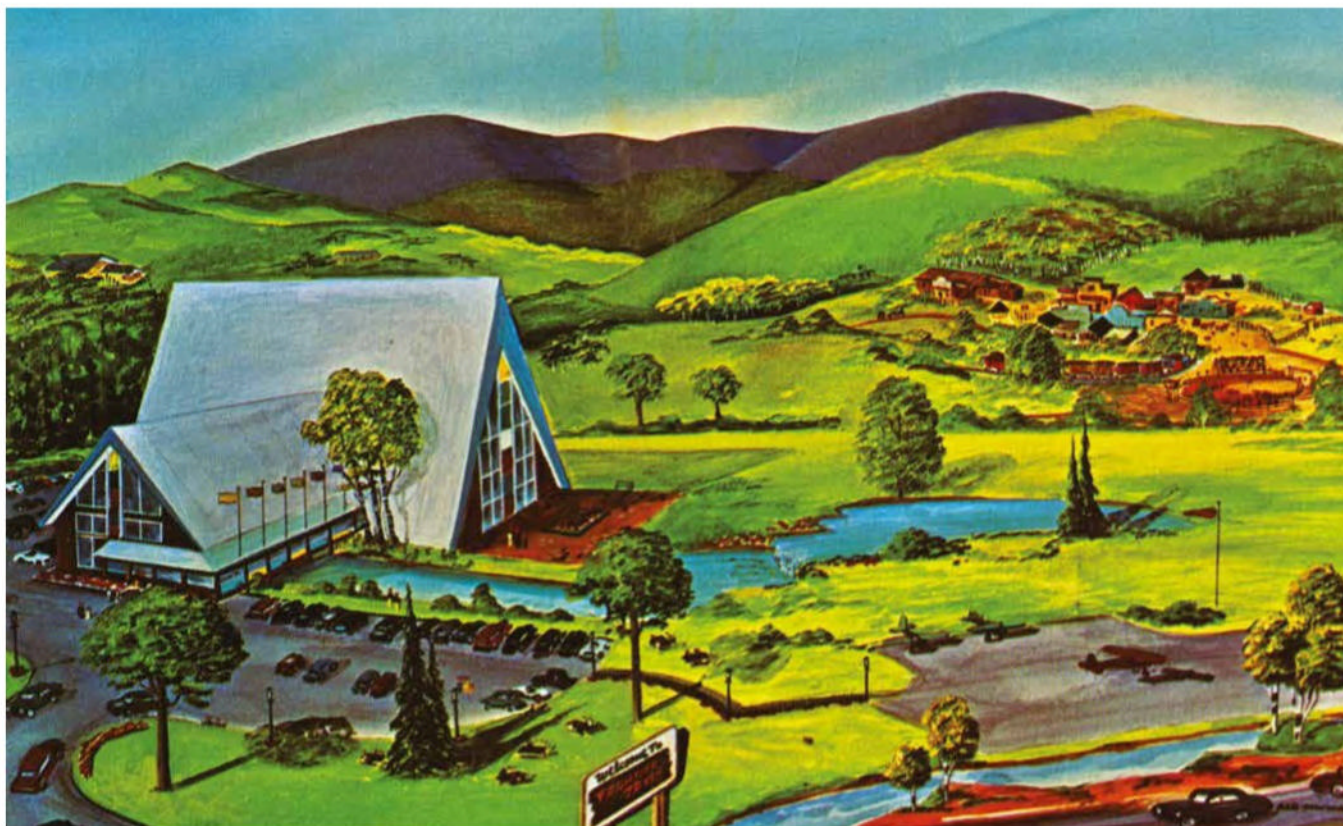
festivals and such as they prepared for their Adirondack adventures.

It would also pump economic oxygen into the Central Adirondack 5-Towns region, which felt its business opportunities had been unfairly punished by massive state land acquisitions for the Forest Preserve. And preservationists, concerned that the High Peaks were being trampled to death by an abundance of Keene Valley hikers, saw a ray of hope that hikers could be lured to the little-used southern approach to the park's highest and most popular mountains.

But as Will Rogers said of communism, it was a good idea, but it didn't work. Search for "Adirondack Gateway" on the web today, and it takes you to an RV park in Gansevoort. "I don't believe there's anything going on with it as far as being a Gateway anymore," said Paul Mrocka, owner of North Hudson's Paradox Brewery. "I think it was just lost."

The reasons are many: no private investor came forward to take control of the project; courts ruled that planned trails to the Adirondack interior would

Despite setbacks, a private/public partnership is working to transform the area around Exit 29 into a tourism hub.



POSTCARD FROM ADIRONDACK EXPERIENCE

come at the cost of too many trees; COVID hit; the property itself ran into title issues; and Cuomo, the project's champion, resigned under a cloud of sexual harassment charges.

Still, it may be premature to write the obituary for the Adirondack Gateway, or "Exit 29," as the collective area is colloquially known. An award-winning lager is brewed at Paradox Brewery. You can also, unlikely as it may seem, find a plate of authentic tandoori chicken at Frontier Town's renovated A-frame, which includes a restaurant specializing in international cuisine. The camping is good, and this summer a national-scale antique show will come to town.

Finally, Essex County has been awarded a state grant to pick up the pieces of Frontier Town and, assuming title issues are cleaned up, do what the state couldn't—build a western-themed arena, preserve some of the old theme-park attractions, add trails, and maybe most important, connect the area's disparate assets.

The state's greatest contribution has been the Frontier Town Campground, comprised of equestrian, RV and tent campsites as well as day-use areas on 91 acres of land owned by North Hudson and Essex County. Combined campground and day-use attendance has been creeping up, according to the Department of Environmental Conservation, thanks in part to its proximity to fishing, hiking, biking and horse-riding opportunities, along with destinations such as Boreas Ponds and the Upper Works trailhead to the High Peaks.

Two private businesses were also enticed to locate off Exit 29—Paradox Brewery and Frontier Town Gateway—both of which became destinations in their own right.

Muhammad "Mo" Ahmad, who like Mrocka saw promise in Cuomo's grand design, bought the old A-frame and opened Frontier Town Gateway in 2021. He was betting that a front-country steward center, along with a hiker shuttle, would create a hive of activity. But the stewards never arrived and the state's new shuttle buses were soon mothballed. Ahmad believes it



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OUTLOOK

was a good idea, but there was no follow-through.

Reviving the project is the goal of Essex County, said chairman of the county board of supervisors Shaun Gilliland, who echoed business owners in saying that one failing of the Adirondack Gateway was a lack of cohesion. The campground, brewery and A-frame exist in separate orbits instead of being part of the whole.

Gilliland said the county will attempt to remedy that by using a connecting property that it owns to build a horse-show arena and music venue, recreating a time when Frontier Town attracted artists such as country music legend Johnny Cash.

Frontier Town opened in 1952 as a classic Adirondack theme park and still resides deep within the hearts of many locals who worked and played there.

"There is a bond to [the A-frame] and people like to come back inside and feel that nostalgia," Ahmad said. "They say, 'Oh my God, look at this—we used to come to Frontier Town when we were kids.' They love the history."

The theme park's saloon, jail and other buildings have been mouldering since it closed 30 years ago and are beyond saving, but Gilliland said some can be reclaimed.

He added that much of the success of the state's equestrian campground depends on its ability to build out a meaningful trail system. "So as far as the horse campers go, they really don't want to go somewhere there's only about three miles," he said. "If we can put some trails on our property, maybe it'll help a little bit, but the long-term health of this horse campground is going to be whether they can actually get these longer trails."

Perhaps the greatest success to come out of the Adirondack Gateway is Paradox Brewery, whose Helles Lager won a gold medal this year as the best light lager in the state.

Mrocka said he's disappointed in the state's overall effort, which yielded not so much as a single motel, but that his business has been a good fit for thirsty hikers coming down out of the peaks.



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OUTLOOK

Open year-round, Paradox has a tasting room, full kitchen with specialty pizzas, and wide decks with expansive mountain views popular with wedding parties.

Brewery-driven traffic was part of what encouraged Anna Hay, who with her husband owned a farmstead in Schroon Lake, to parley the family cow into Hay Fields Antiques and Flea Market about a mile north of the new campground, at the site of the former Gokey's Outlet Stores. Hay said she is shooting for a Memorial Day weekend opening, and from July 25 to 27, will host the Brimfield Antique Show, the oldest outdoor antique flea market in the nation.

During the COVID shutdown, Hay said she began playing around with cheese- and soap-making with the milk from their Holstein named Esther. Esther produced a lot of milk and Hay produced a lot of soap, which her family found gentler than commercial brands. But she was making more than her family could use. "Pretty soon I had so much soap that my husband was, like, 'We either need to stop making soap, or you need to start selling it'—so I started The Family Cow soaps."

Hay looked for retail space in Schroon Lake before hearing that the sprawling Gokey's complex was for sale. Now the problem was not too much soap, it was too much space. Hay called on her experience dabbling in antiques and, as luck would have it, discovered that the eastern Adirondacks was something of an antiques desert. "People were walking into the Schroon Chamber of Commerce and asking where the nearest antique mall was—the answer was that there wasn't one," Hay said, a shortcoming she aims to remedy.

No one's declaring victory, but bit by bit the Adirondack Gateway seems to be gaining momentum. Ahmad, whose A-frame also hosts events and caters to campers in need of supplies, said current demand isn't sufficient to keep it open all year. But piggybacking on a full-service truck stop may increase traffic. Like everyone attached to Exit 29, he's learned to be flexible. "We've all had dreams," he said. 🏔️

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Who Is That Masked Marauder?

Living—and playing—among raccoons

BY EDWARD KANZE

With raccoons, you either see too much of them, or, when you have friends visiting from overseas and you want to show them one, there's neither hide nor hair to be found.

For years at our place along the Saranac River, we saw no raccoons whatsoever. Occasionally late at night elsewhere in the Adirondacks, one bolted across the road in front of our car, but this never happened in the driveway. Over time, though, backyard sightings began to happen. Then they began to happen often.

Last night a raccoon visited our bird feeder. I stepped out the door and heard a loud *thump* as it dropped to the ground. I've come to know that *thump* well.

In a shed that is permeable to raccoons, we store bird seed in a metal garbage can, the lid weighed down with an old car rim. First I tried fastening the lid with a bungee, but a raccoon promptly gnawed the bungee in two. Next I tried rope. The result was the same.

The best looks at Adirondack raccoons tend to occur

Most raccoons in the Adirondacks grow fat—up to 30 pounds—on fruit, nuts, fungi and a wide array of animals.

while camping, often between midnight and four a.m. Snug in your sleeping bag, you hear a bang or a crash. An animal—you're not yet sure what kind—has knocked over your cookstove. Or the noise may be that of clean dishes being flipped on the ground or your cooler being rifled.

Hesitating to confront the visitor, which might be a bear, you switch on a flashlight. A pair of shiny, close-set eyes embedded in a black mask stare back at you. You feel relief. This isn't a bear. Yet the relief is short-lived. The raccoon knows the game. It will not leave until you crawl out of your sleeping bag. What's worse, the animal, or animals—raccoons often appear in family groups—returns as soon as you fall back to sleep.

When I'm in a mood to admire raccoons, which I am when it's not the middle of the night, I view them as bright, cute, and endearing. They used to be popular pets. Calvin Coolidge kept one at the White House. The animal had been a gift from a constituent who expected Coolidge to serve the raccoon at Thanksgiving dinner. Instead, the Commander-in-Chief, famed in the Adirondacks for making his 1926 Summer White House at White Pine Camp, near Paul Smiths, kept the raccoon as a pet. He named her Rebecca. Rebecca and the President would take walks together on the White House lawn.

Charming as raccoons can be, I once learned firsthand that they have a brutal and merciless side, at least by human standards. A nature center where I worked had welcomed the donation of a tame, talking crow. A man had found the crow as a nestling and raised it. He loved it as if it were his child. But teaching the crow to talk backfired. The man's wife could not abide the incessant babble. I housed the bird in the only place I had available: an outdoor cage screened with chicken-wire.

The crow grew jumpy over the next few days. It looked ragged, like it wasn't sleeping. I wish I'd realized why. After about a week, it must have fallen asleep one night against the front of the cage. A raccoon or raccoons (telltale shocks



PHOTOGRAPH FROM ISTOCK

of raccoon fur were left on the chicken wire) grabbed the bird and pulled it out, one chunk of flesh at a time. Nothing was left but feathers. More than thirty years later, I still feel pangs of guilt and grieve for that crow. The tragedy taught me that humans are hardly the only species to practice cruelty to animals.

On the whole, though, I'm delighted to live among raccoons, at least most of the time. This is true especially when I glimpse the animal in the wild, far from campsites and bird feeders. Sometimes I spy one poking its handsome snout out of a den in a hollow tree or hunched over a brook, plucking crayfish from a stream. Raccoons scrub crayfish and other aquatic prey, at least sometimes. This behavior gives rise to the popular notion that raccoons wash their food. Sometimes they do. Just as often they just fish out a tasty morsel and swallow it pronto.

Houseguests from other parts of the world remind me how well-known and warmly regarded our raccoon is in the rest of the world. Just as Africa is famous for its elephants, lions, giraffes, and rhinos, North America is renowned for its raccoons, and for its skunks, too. Expatriate raccoons also add to the fame. In Germany, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Japan, wild populations of introduced raccoons flourish and wreak mayhem. According to a 2012 story in the magazine *Der Spiegel*, the number of the masked marauders living in the wilds of Germany approaches a million.

Back home, the Adirondack raccoon's diet includes only a little bratwurst and sushi. Mostly the animals here grow fat (a big one weighs 30 pounds) on fruits, nuts, fungi, and a wide array of animals. Once considered small bears but now seen as only distant cousins, raccoons are also accomplished dumpster divers. They are notoriously clever at breaking and entering and never averse to grabbing a pizza. Watch for them. You can be sure they're watching you. ▲

Excerpted from naturalist, guide, photographer and writer Edward Kanze's *The Nature of the Place: On the Flora and Fauna of the Adirondacks* (North Country Books, 2025).

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Low(er) Profiles

A dozen not-so-high outings
around the park

Sunrise on Rooster Comb Mountain, in the town of Keene.

Not to take anything away from the High Peaks—46 4,000-plus-foot stunners that have beguiled Adirondack hikers for generations—but sometimes size does matter, and bigger isn't always better. If you're in the market for some shorter trips that are long on rewards, read on.

Balm of Gilead Mountain, Johnsburg

This 1.8-mile round-trip expedition delivers wide-open views of the Siamese Ponds Wilderness Area and Thirteenth Lake. In the mood for more exploring? The trek can be combined with a 1-mile round-trip detour to the abandoned open garnet pit at Hooper Mine. The trailhead begins on the property of Garnet Hill Lodge (www.garnet-hill.com), a base camp for year-round outdoor adventures.

If You Go: From Route 28 in North River, follow Thirteenth Lake Road southwest 4.6 miles. Continue another 0.2 mile past the Garnet Hill Lodge entrance and park off the road. The trailhead is accessed to the left of the tennis courts.

Belfry Mountain, Witherbee

Less than half a mile's not-too-strenuous hike brings you to this summit overlooking a former mining community. The fire tower affords views of the High Peaks, Lake Champlain and Vermont, plus remnants of iron-ore mining operations.

If You Go: From Elizabethtown, head south on Lincoln Pond Road, continuing 3.5 miles past the Department of Environmental Conservation's Lincoln Pond Campground. Fork right onto County Road 7C; the trailhead is on the right. From Witherbee, head north on 7C, a

little more than a mile past the intersection with County Road 6.

Moss Lake Loop, Webb

This popular 2.5-mile loop asks for little in the way of effort but gives a lot in return. The trail provides a pleasant mix of both woodsy and water scenes, with a sandy beach and wildlife viewing platform near its start.

If You Go: From Route 28, in Eagle Bay, turn onto Big Moose Road. The parking area will be another 2 miles on the left.

Goodnow Mountain, Newcomb

This 1.9-mile trail, with both steep and catch-your-breath sections, offers a 360-degree view from its fire tower. You'll see most of the High Peaks, as well as a few of the surrounding lakes, including Rich Lake. For shoreline views of Rich, head down the road to the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) Adirondack Interpretive Center (www.esf.edu/aic), with its 3.6-mile trail system.

If You Go: From the intersection of Routes 28N and 30 in the town of Long Lake, follow Route 28N toward Newcomb. After about 12 miles, the Goodnow Mountain trailhead is marked with a large white ESF sign on the right. Find the interpretive center 2 miles farther along Route 28N, on the left.

Rooster Comb Mountain, Keene

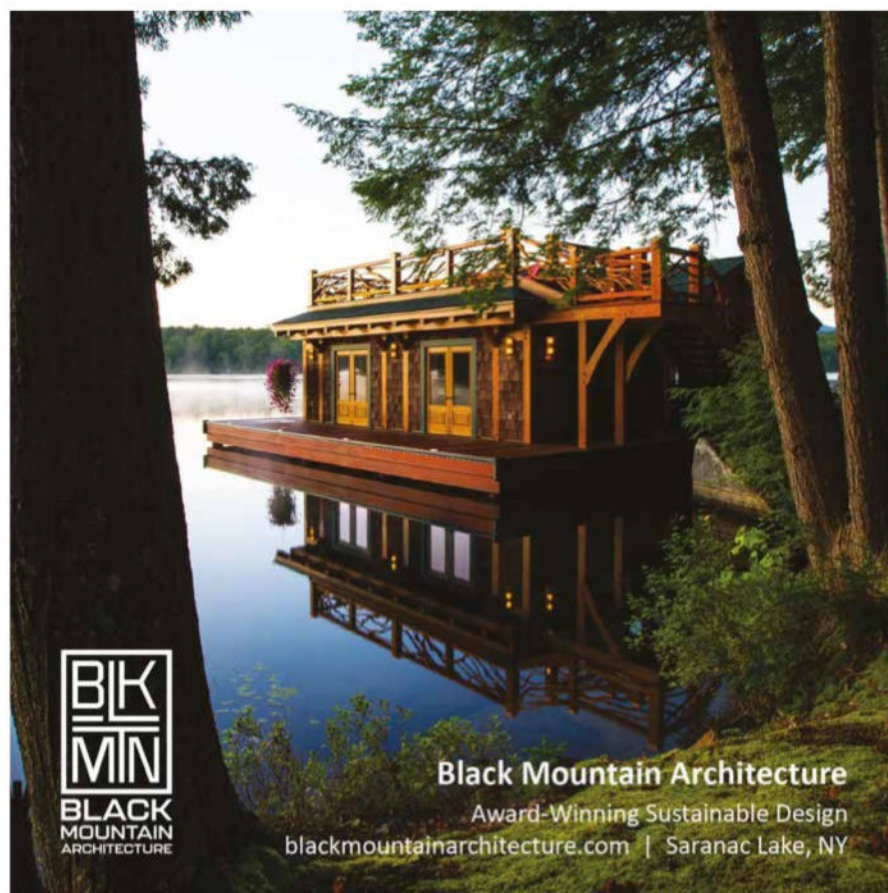
Catching the sunrise on Rooster Comb Mountain means getting up well before the cock crows, but watching the day debut on a mountaintop is worth the trouble, says photographer Johnathan Esper. "There's a certain quality to the air, to the light that makes it special," he says. "The sun coming up, warming the air, it's an unmistakable feeling."

If a summit sunrise is on your bucket list, this easy-to-moderate 2.5-mile trail up Rooster Comb is a good option.

If You Go: The trailhead is on Route 73, about a half-mile south of Keene Valley's village center.

Wolf Pond, North Hudson

On this 5-mile round-trip through old-



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HIKING

growth forest, boreal trees stand chopstick straight before branching out, so sunshine hits the forest floor where ferns abound. They cluster around numerous erratics, clinging to boulders and carpeting the ground as far as a walker can see.

If You Go: The trailhead for Wolf Pond is on the Blue Ridge Road, just east of the bridge over the Boreas River and a few miles west of Gulf Brook Road. Allow 3 or more hours for the hike and exploring near the pond.

Moxham Mountain, Minerva

With nearly a dozen overlooks along 2.5 miles, this climb doesn't skimp on the views, including the Hudson River, Ruby Mountain's garnet mine, the fire tower on Snowy Mountain and a valley dotted with ponds and wetlands.

If You Go: From Route 28N in Minerva, turn onto Fourteenth Road and follow it for about 2 miles. Look for a Department of Environmental Conservation sign just after the road turns to dirt. Park there. The trail dives into the woods directly from the parking area, but it's hidden back in the trees.

Fawn Lake, Lake Pleasant

For a short trek to a sweet swim spot, head to this shallow, sandy-bottom lake in the Jessup River Wild Forest, just west of Sacandaga Lake. The 1.5-mile trail to the north end of the lake is a mostly level walk through hardwoods, though it can be muddy at times.

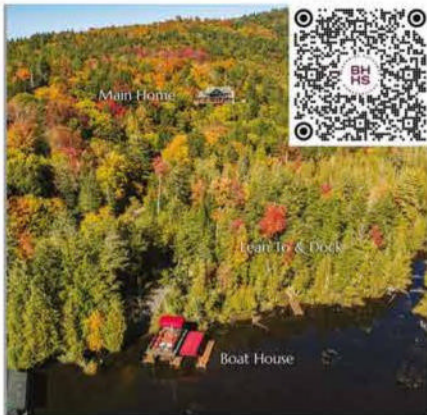
If You Go: From Speculator, follow Route 8 for 4 miles. Turn right at Fish Mountain Road, then left to stay on it. Turn right onto Fawn Lake Road until you reach the parking area at 0.8 mile.

Silver Lake Bog Trail, Black Brook

The first half of this mile-long stroll is along a wooden boardwalk through a bog habitat. There are birds everywhere and lush plants to investigate, from sphagnum moss and ferns to mushrooms and incredible pitcher plants. When the boardwalk ends, the trail leads through hardwood forest to piney bluffs and a view of Silver Lake, 400 feet below.

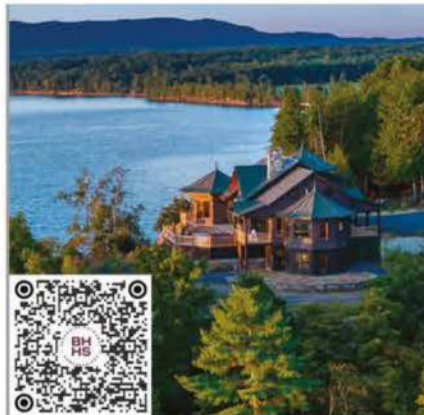
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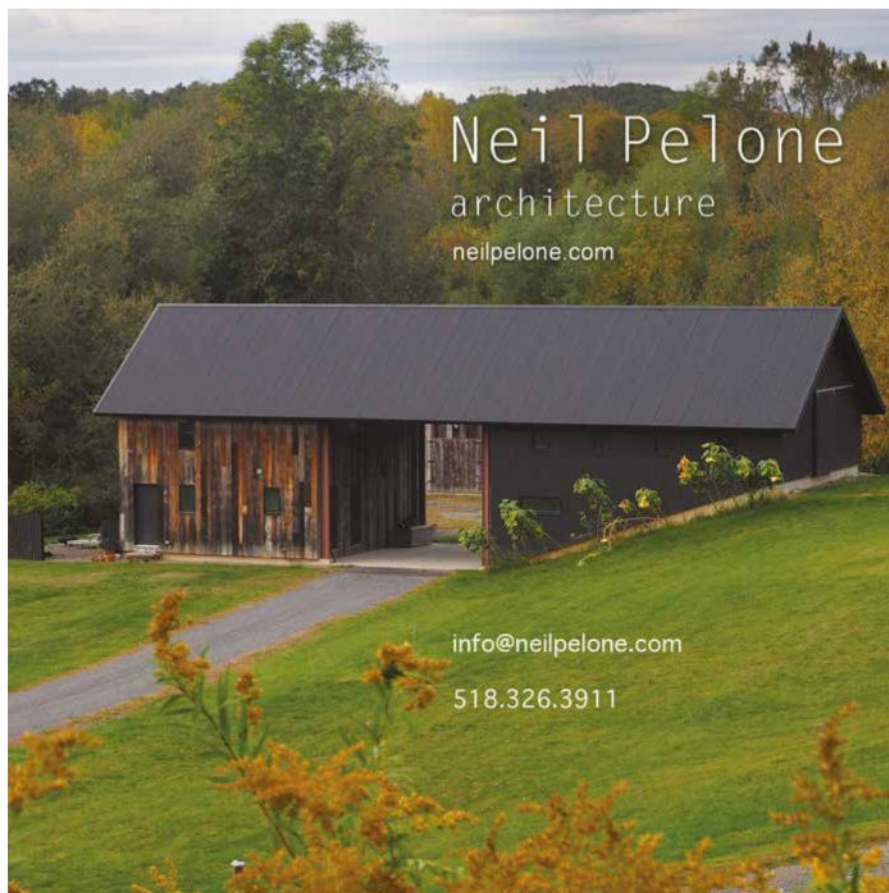
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HIKING

Bonnieview Road to Silver Lake Road. Turn left and after about 7 miles, take a left at the fork, following Union Falls Road. After just over a mile, take a left onto Old Hawkeye Road. There is a small parking lot on the right.

Swede Mountain, Hague

In its early days the only folks who scaled Swede Mountain's tower were up there to spot fires; now anyone can climb the seven flights to soak in stunning views of Gore and Crane Mountains and Brant Lake. All it takes is an easy, 1.8-mile round-trip—dotted with abundant wild raspberries in season.

If You Go: The peak's trailhead and parking area, by North Pond, can be found 5.5 miles west of Hague on Route 8. Swede's trail crosses private property. For this reason, the trail and tower are closed to the public during hunting season.

Buck Mountain, Long Lake

This 1.2-mile trail was a group effort—Hamilton County, the Town of Long Lake and the Adirondack Mountain Club collaborated on the path up the peak, adding almost a dozen hand-built rock and wooden staircases. At the summit, the rehabbed 1930s-era fire tower offers a great view of the William C. Whitney Wilderness Area and Little Tupper Lake.

If You Go: The hike's trailhead and parking area, at 484 South Sabattis Circle Road, is about 10 miles north of the hamlet of Long Lake.

Bear Mountain, Cranberry Lake

This 3.7-mile loop passes a lean-to—a great spot to stop for snacks—and a rocky outcrop with a picture-perfect bird's-eye view of Cranberry Lake. It's a kid-friendly outing that leaves plenty of time for a post-hike dip at the Department of Environmental Conservation Cranberry Lake Campground, where the trail begins and ends.

If You Go: Cranberry Lake Campground is on Route 3, just east of the hamlet of Cranberry Lake. The Bear Mountain loop starts near Site 28. There is an \$8 day-use fee at the campground. ▲

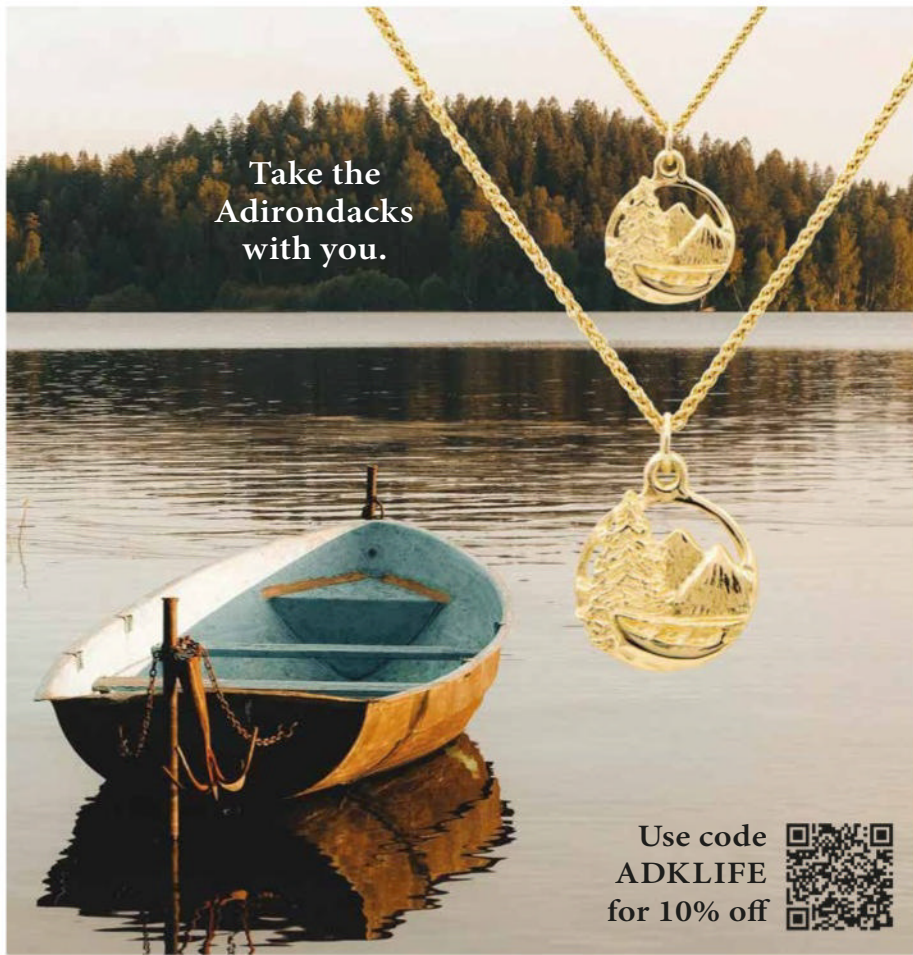
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Bird Notes

Want to go birding in the park? Let Joan Collins show you the way

Listen for boreal chickadees' nasal chatter in high-elevation habitats.

Know Before You Go:

Learn the birds around your home first.

A feeder is a great way to attract them. Most species are habitat specific, so branch out by visiting marshes, bogs, forests (boreal, deciduous and mixed), grasslands, shrublands, high elevations and more.

The early birder gets the bird!

Be out watching by first light. Birds are most active at dawn and the early hours of the morning.

Optics, including binoculars, scopes and cameras, can be costly, but they are investments you will likely have for a long time. I still have the binoculars I bought 25 years ago.

Join a local birding organization.

Most clubs host field trips, sponsor citizen-science projects and host speakers. Attend the field trips—it's a wonderful way to learn more about birds and meet people who can offer tips about identification and behaviors.

Purchase a field guide such as *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America*. There are many apps for smart phones, but I recommend putting the phone away and learning by spending time outside, listening to bird songs and observing behaviors. You can add apps for reference later. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds website is packed with helpful information.

Star Sightings:

Spruce grouse is an endangered and rare-to-see species in the Adirondacks. Madawaska Flow and Massawepie Bog are two locations to watch for this tame grouse in boreal forests and bog edges containing tamarack trees.

Black-backed woodpeckers specialize in eating the wood-boring beetle larvae in dead trees of both high- and low-elevation wet boreal forests.

Canada jays are curious, intelligent and highly engaging, often landing in a hand

for food. Continually caching food all year, they are able to remember thousands of hidden stores. Look for them in boreal forests and bogs.

Boreal chickadees are quickly disappearing from low-elevation areas of the Adirondack Park. Listen for their nasal vocalizations in boreal habitat at higher elevations, where they are still doing well.

Bicknell's thrush, the only endemic species in the northeastern United States, has an ethereal flute-like song. Look for this endangered thrush in high-elevation balsam fir forests. The easiest way to reach its habitat is to drive up Whiteface Mountain.

Joan Collins leads birding outings each summer and fall. This year's trips explore the William C. Whitney Wilderness Area, Roosevelt Truck Trail and the Upper Dam Trail to Hitchens Pond. Learn more at www.mylonglake.com.

Mourning warbler, named for its dark hood, is nearly always on visitors' wish lists. Look for this beautiful bird in thickets with tall trees nearby for singing perches, such as areas growing back after logging or power-line cuts.

Feathered Facts:

The American woodcock's amusing bobbing, rocking motion has an important purpose. Watch closely to see the birds' toes push on the ground to get earthworms moving. Their long bills then probe the soil to capture the worms.

Black-backed woodpeckers use a clever technique to get their nestlings to fledge from the nest cavity. Withholding food for an hour or two, an adult eventually

arrives with a mouthful for the hungry babies, but perches below the hole. The nestling falls from the hole as it leans for the food, learning to fly "on the fly."

Blackpoll warblers, weighing only half an ounce, have the longest over-water flight of any songbird. At the end of the summer, they head to the East Coast, doubling their weight along the way. Then they fly nonstop for three to four days over the Atlantic Ocean to South America.

Common loons have an adaptation for consuming large fish: the sharp rearward-pointing denticles on the roof of their mouths and tongues that interlock with the scales of fish. After wrestling a fish so it can be swallowed headfirst, they throw back their head over and over to send the fish down their throat.

Birding Spots:

Massawepie Mire is the largest bog in New York and a lovely place to hike. The main trail (formerly a railbed), runs for miles through bogs, forests (boreal, mixed and deciduous) and marshes. Boreal birds such as palm warbler and Lincoln's sparrow are abundant. It's a designated Important Bird Area (IBA).

Keese Mills Road to Blue Mountain Road and the Madawaska trail offer a variety of birds in a remote, quiet area. Habitats include shrubby areas (with mourning warblers), marshes, beaver-created wetlands, ponds and forests (boreal, mixed and deciduous).

William C. Whitney Wilderness Area, along Sabattis Road, has 18 nesting warbler species. It's a designated IBA.

Minerva Railbed and the Roosevelt Truck Trail along Route 28N offer a great combination outing. Hike the railbed south into open wetlands (brook, pond and marsh) with seven flycatcher species. The wide Roosevelt Truck Trail, a short drive (0.3 mile) up the hill from the railbed, is 2.5 miles of mostly mature boreal and mixed forest. ▲

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Mystery Spot

The riddle of
First Lake's Dog Island

BY LAUREN BREEDLOVE

This speck of an island—a playground for my dog, Scout—has an unusual residential mailbox.

The boat bounces through a choppy First Lake, delivering a refreshing Adirondack spritz. Scout's ears perk up in recognition; she knows where we're headed. Upon approach, our destination looks like nothing more than a cluster of pines sprouting from the dark water.

We reach the speck of an island, and I give Scout the go-ahead, prompting a victory jump with a dramatic splash. Swimming to the slender stretch of sand, she shakes off and gets into her ready stance, so I'll throw her most treasured possession: her ball. I comply, of course; this is our game. After a few tosses, we continue our Dog Island ritual, ambling up the worn, sandy trail to the crest of the tiny hill.

I take in the 360-degree view, the late afternoon sunshine splicing through the clouds. It's a perfect summer day at our

favorite spot.

It's also a place shrouded in mystery. I set out to solve it.

On Dog Island, there's a residential-style mailbox—an odd thing on an uninhabited island.

Inside the mailbox are a notebook and pen, greeting "Dog Islanders" on the opening page. New visitors are encouraged to share something important to them. All are asked "to respect the diary and island, live life, and be happy." It's signed with love from "The Keeper." Flipping through the notebook reveals tales and sketches of various ventures to the island, plus stories about the dogs who've played here, and the beauty of this little paradise.

Who's the Keeper? Nearby Old Forge is a small town; how hard can it be to uncover the mystery?

I ask around town; surely someone knows about the mailbox. Except, no one does. I set out to find whether the island is public or private land. On maps, the dot representing Dog Island is too

minuscule to tell.

I call the Town of Webb Historical Association at the Goodsell Museum. The director, Kate Lewis, joins the search and procures an excerpt from an article in the *Syracuse Sunday Herald* published on July 28th, 1895.

According to the excerpt, the place has a disturbing backstory. A dog had been left there, tied to a tree. The ending was not a good one. The dog's fate prompted the name, Dog Island.

Lewis and I speculate about why someone would do such a thing. Per-

I take in the 360-degree view, the afternoon sunshine splicing through the clouds. It's a perfect day at our favorite spot. It's also a place shrouded in mystery. I set out to solve it.

haps the dog was rabid, or the owner was just evil. Either way, this is not the heartwarming story I had expected.

The historical association didn't possess the rest of the article, so I scour the *Syracuse Sunday Herald's* archives. A dead end. I turn to social media, joining the History and Legends of the Adirondacks' Facebook group. I search old photographs, newspaper clippings, and local lore and ask the group's nearly 36,000 members if they have information about the island. Not one bite.

That's when I hear from Lewis again. After a conversation with the Department of Environmental Conservation, she confirms that Dog Island is state-owned. But nobody knows who had erected the mailbox. Meanwhile, I contact the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism, and they send me an article from the *Boonville Herald & Adirondack Tourist*, published on September 9th, 2015, by local author Aline Alexander Newman. Her piece, "Dog Island," details her family tradition of visiting the island each summer, its allure matching what



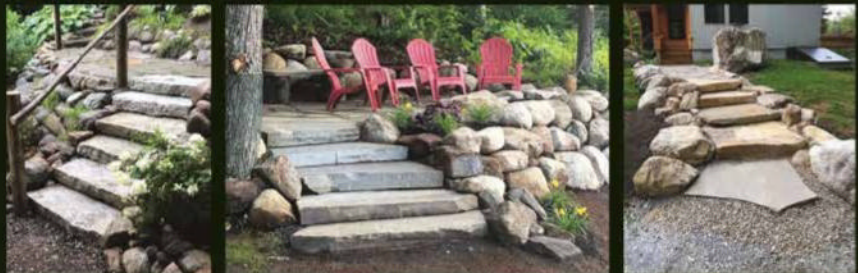
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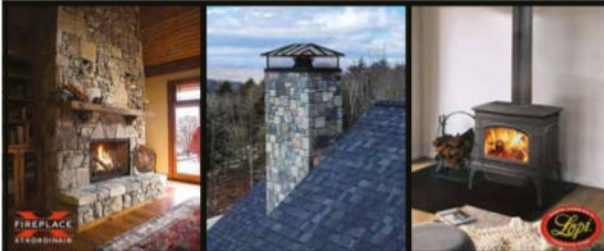
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EXPLORING

draws me back again and again.

In the article, Newman mentions the notebook as the third edition of the *Dog Island Diaries*, making 2012 its debut year. I contact Newman to see if she knows more; she doesn't, but shares some names of people who might.

I start with Mark Eddy, who lives in Old Forge. Eddy suggests I speak to Dan Rivet Jr., who was born and raised in town—his family goes back six generations in this corner of the Adirondacks.

"My grandkids used to call it 'Puppy Island,'" Rivet says. "We'd go there to swim, but that was years ago, and there was no mailbox. I used to work with my uncle, who'd tell me many stories, but I don't know anything about Dog Island's history."

I was losing sleep over a mailbox.

I circle back to the 1895 *Syracuse Sunday Herald* excerpt; why couldn't I find the complete article in the newspaper's archives? I hadn't considered its merger, first with the *Syracuse Herald Journal* in 1939, and then with the *Post Standard* in 2001. I reach out to the *Post Standard*, and am directed to the Onondaga Historical Society, where the director of archives and special collections, Sarah Kozma, finds the entire article.

Is this my breakthrough?

The article details former President Benjamin Harrison's summer on First Lake, where he and his family stayed at Dodd's Camp, "a typical mountain cottage," seeking "rest and quiet." A lengthy description of the scenery leads up to the excerpt Lewis, at the Town of Webb Historical Association, had given me.

But the rest of the piece fails to expand on the history of Dog Island—just more tidbits about Harrison's summer of fishing, relaxing and mingling with visiting politicians, including a tour of the Adirondack League Club.

The "Keeper" obviously wants to remain anonymous. I realize that maybe some things are better left a mystery to preserve the enchantment.

My trips to Dog Island—its pines, First Lake sparkling all around in the sunlight, Scout bounding into the water, wagging her tail—keep that Adirondack magic alive. ▲



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Not So Rough

All of the wilderness,
none of the work

BY LILACE MELLIN GUIGNARD

It was the first evening of our paddling trip when I fully realized what a paradigm shift this was going to be for me—and what a fool I'd been for not booking a guided wilderness trip long before. Our guide (later that evening he got the nickname Blaze) added mushrooms to the spaghetti sauce simmering over the cookfire he'd started while we set up our tents. A foil-wrapped baguette warmed at the edge of the coals. I sipped wine and relaxed, bathed in golden light streaking between tall hemlocks, while a multi-course dinner materialized in front of me. Here I was, on Long Pond in the St. Regis Canoe Area, yet this felt like luxury.

There were four of us, all in our 50s and 60s, all outdoorsy but whose time spent exploring wild areas had drastically declined due to work and family responsibilities, age-related

aches and pains, and living in a different region than where we'd done our youthful outings. My husband, Jimmy, and I paddled, climbed and camped around western North Carolina and the Sierras before moving to north-central Pennsylvania to teach. Chris Espenshade paddled, fished and explored in areas near archeology digs—roughing it in the field. That's how he met his wife, Linda Kennedy, a wee lass from Scotland, who'd hiked the highlands there and in the South. Jimmy and I met them in Pennsylvania at Mansfield University, where Linda taught geosciences and environmental science, and my husband and I taught writing and environmental literature, while I also taught outdoor recreation leadership.

Linda was the reason I started camping in the Adirondacks, a four-to-six-hour drive for us, depending on our destination. Even though she'd experienced

BELOW: The author, on right, and her paddle party during their multi-night St. Regis Canoe Area adventure.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

southern summers, she had the nerve to complain about Pennsylvania humidity one June and wish for the temps of Scotland. I told her I knew where she needed to go and took her camping at Heart Lake. She loved the Adirondack Park. We plodded up a couple of the smaller peaks and bought our patches (or “badges,” as she says in her brogue). We did this one more summer before admitting to each other that Cascade was probably the biggest peak we were going to summit, what with my bum knee and her pounding heart.

“We could paddle instead,” I suggested.

“Then Chris would probably come,” she said.

And if Chris came, Jimmy might, I thought. It’d been ages since we’d been in the wilderness together.

I didn’t think planning such a trip would be that hard. Heck, I taught how to plan such trips. But the time it took to figure out logistics in an unfamiliar area, even one as mapped and reviewed as the Adirondack Park, meant I never got around to it. A few years went by, and I bought a super light pack canoe on Labor Day in 2022, a month before a partial knee replacement. After investing that much money in a boat so I could keep exploring even if my knees never returned to hiking form, I knew I had to learn how to paddle and camp in the Adirondack wilderness.

Then I remembered that Linda and I, one rainy day when we were poking around shops in Saranac Lake, met a young man selling maps who also guided for St. Regis Canoe Outfitters. With my leg propped up and iced, I checked out their website and clicked for info on a multi-night trip. Like most outdoorsy folks who started dirt-bagging in college, I was of the penny-pinching, borrow-gear-or-buy-it-used group, who scoffed at the things I couldn’t afford so much I ended up believing I didn’t want anything better. I mean, a guided trip is like booking a cruise, right? (Shudder.) But I was desperate. And getting older every second.

Such self-righteous high ground suddenly seemed silly. I’d splurged on a boat

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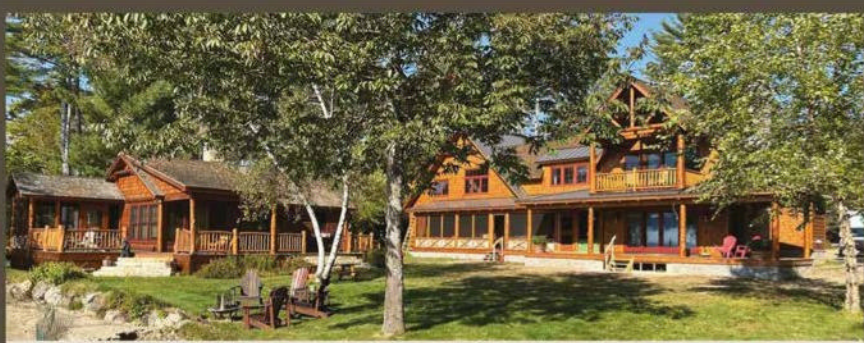
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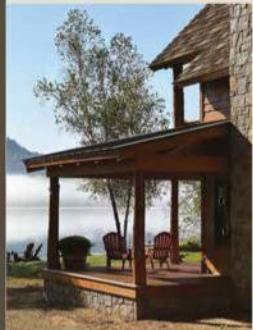
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PADDLING

I could paddle and carry into my dotage, so the seal had been broken. We didn't have a lot of money, but we weren't starving grad students anymore.

I read the trip description. The price per person for four people wasn't anywhere close to what I'd expected. I looked again. Yep, it included everything except travel there. I emailed Linda, and she agreed. We got vague nods from our husbands and dove into planning the dates. And everything else.

Which wasn't much because all we had to do was fill out a checklist of gear we needed for camping and paddling, and our menu choices (if it said Canadian bacon we checked it). We didn't even bother asking the guys.

And now, in early August, here we were on Long Pond. Away from campground crowds, chatting and laughing, learning thunderbox etiquette, enjoying some libations and a trail mix appetizer, while Blaze made us more than comfortable. We'd warned owner Maeghan Farnham, who coordinated our reservation and asked what we wanted from a guide, that we had a birder, two archaeologists, one geologist, environmental lit profs, and a poet-in-a-pine-tree. I also wanted to learn how to pack for solo canoe camping, how to use the maps, and what the etiquette was for claiming campsites. She gave us Matt Smith, and he fit right in (even though at least 20 years younger than us). None of us remember why we started calling him Blaze, but he was keen on it.

We were paddling the Floodwood Pond Loop, rated beginner (or else Linda wouldn't have agreed to come—she says I'm too aggro). Matt warmed lunch for us over a fire on Slang Pond, but once we hit Long Pond the campsites were all full. Lucky for us, though, because the site we got near the next day's portage had a wooden thunderbox, a new term for us. Linda, whose feet didn't touch the ground, broke the edge off when boosting herself up, but we were able to cobble it back together. We all agreed this was our potty pick. The open air and view beat outhouses and (especially recovering from knee surgery) squatting.

The next morning when I got up, cof-



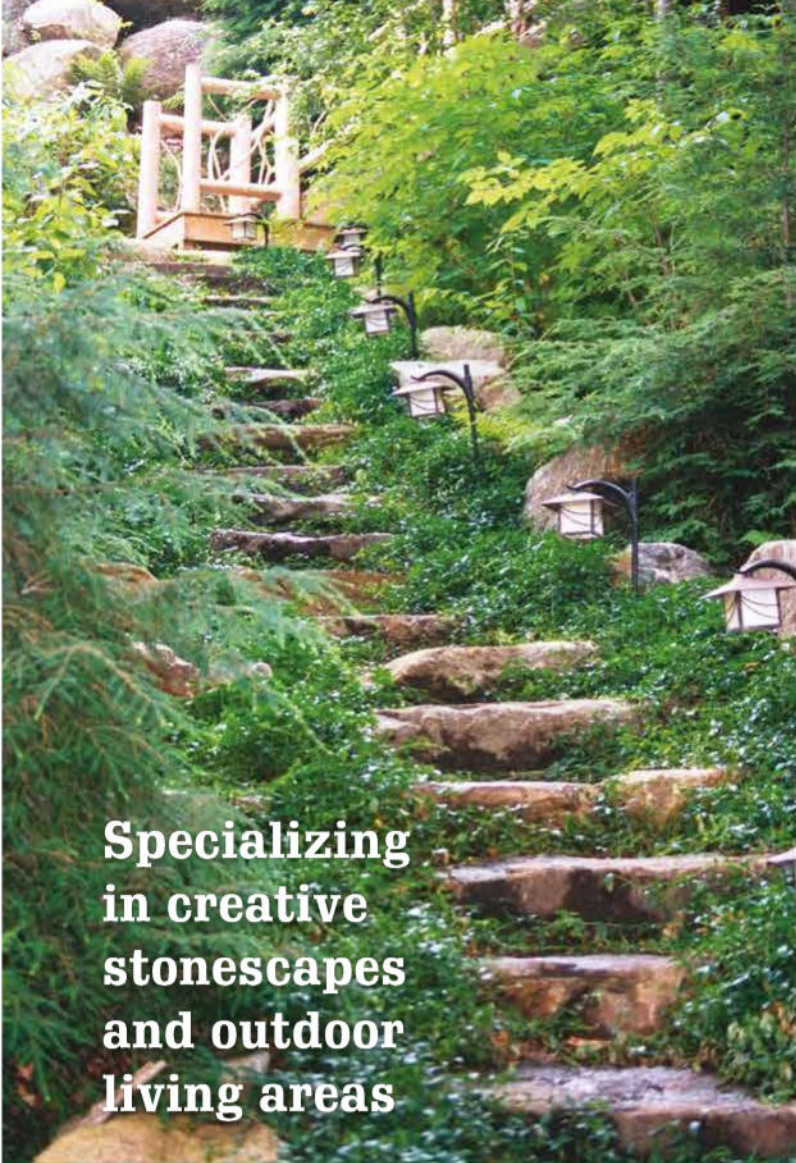
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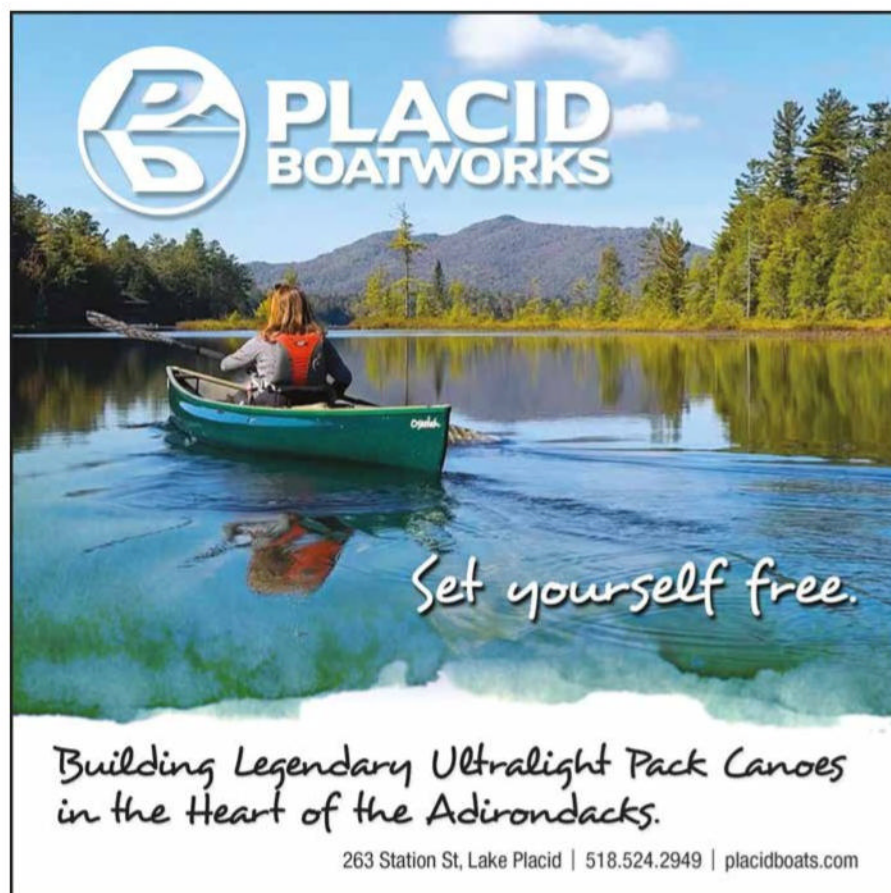


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PADDLING

fee was ready, and Blaze fried Canadian bacon glazed with maple syrup to go with French toast. Unfolding my camp chair, I felt more pampered than if I were handed a fluffy robe and mimosa. Total peace and quiet except for us and the occasional slam of the thunderbox lid.

The morning portage was not cushy, since recent rains had made it muddy. The upside was it was shorter, because the last part of the portage could be paddled. Blaze hauled the heaviest gear, but we didn't shirk. Soon we were enjoying Floodwood Pond and, joy of joys, Fish Creek—easily our favorite stretch. We camped at the point where the creek opens into Little Square Pond. After exploring among the lily pads, I sat on roots, soaking my knee in the creek. One man paddling by pointed at my 14.8 Swift Cruiser carbon fusion and said, "That's a nice boat."

I nodded. "I love my boat."

"It's good to love your boat," he said, and the wise man disappeared upstream.

The other three had light boats from the livery—a tandem for Chris and Linda, and a solo pack canoe for Jimmy. Chris was paddling with a wee lassie, and Jimmy was paddling in one, I pointed out.

"We got in the boats, and [Blaze] was like, 'Follow me,'" Linda fondly recalls. "All weekend it was easy. Get in the canoe. OK. Get out of the canoe. OK." And we only paddled four to five miles a day.

The last night, a barred owl landed in the tree above our campfire. When it asked, "Who cooks for you?" we answered, "Blaze." And he cleaned up too, though we couldn't stop ourselves from helping. ▲

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Lilace Mellin Guignard is associate editor of Mountain Home magazine and author of the book When Everything Beyond the Walls Is Wild: Being a Woman Outdoors in America.

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Massawepie Mired

An epic paddle and bike combo
through remote country

BY PHIL BROWN

The Massawepie Mire, located near the tiny hamlet of Gale, which lies just east of the tiny hamlet of Childwold, deserves a place on every Adirondack bucket list. The wetland complex includes a 740-acre peatland, the largest in New York State—a remarkable habitat easily accessible by an old railbed. The bog harbors several avian species sought after by birders, including the endangered spruce grouse.

I had canoed through the mire and biked through it, but not on the same day. So last summer I enlisted two friends—Tim, a fellow retiree, and Clem, a youngster at 56—to join me on a two-sport adventure that would immerse us in the wild for nearly six hours.

We put in at the South Branch of the Grass River on conservation easement lands south of the Massawepie Boy Scout Camp, canoed and carried to an inconspicuous takeout on Route 3, and then pedaled back to our vehicles, following the bed of the former Grasse River Railroad. The canoe leg was 10 miles; the bike leg, nine miles.

Careful readers will have noted the variant spelling Grasse. This is an old debate.

Some people insist that's the river's real name, derived either from the French *La Grasse* or in honor of Comte de Grasse, a French admiral who fought in the American Revolution. Although the U.S. Board on Geographic Names settled on Grass way back in 1905, road signs, maps and official documents remain inconsistent.

Whether you prefer Grass or La Grasse, you will see plenty of the stuff on this serpentine stream, along with tag alders, cardinal flowers, Joe-pye weed, spotted touch-me-not, and tall white pines. As for wildlife, we flushed many ducks, a great blue heron, and a beaver. Clem watched the last critter swim from its lodge and slip into the alders, slapping its tail in annoyance.

The water was high, thanks to the summer's heavy rains. I hoped we would float over all the beaver dams in our solo canoes, but this proved too optimistic. We came to the first one a half-mile from the put-in. Tim and I disembarked to clear a passage. Then my phone rang, and for the first time in my life I carried on a conversation with a state official while balancing on a beaver dam. My business concluded, we all paddled through a breach in the leaky edifice and continued on our merry, meandering way.

Clem had canoed only once before in the Adirondacks, when he and Tim pad-

Pedaling over puddles along the old Grasse River Railroad. Paddling downstream on the Grass River.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

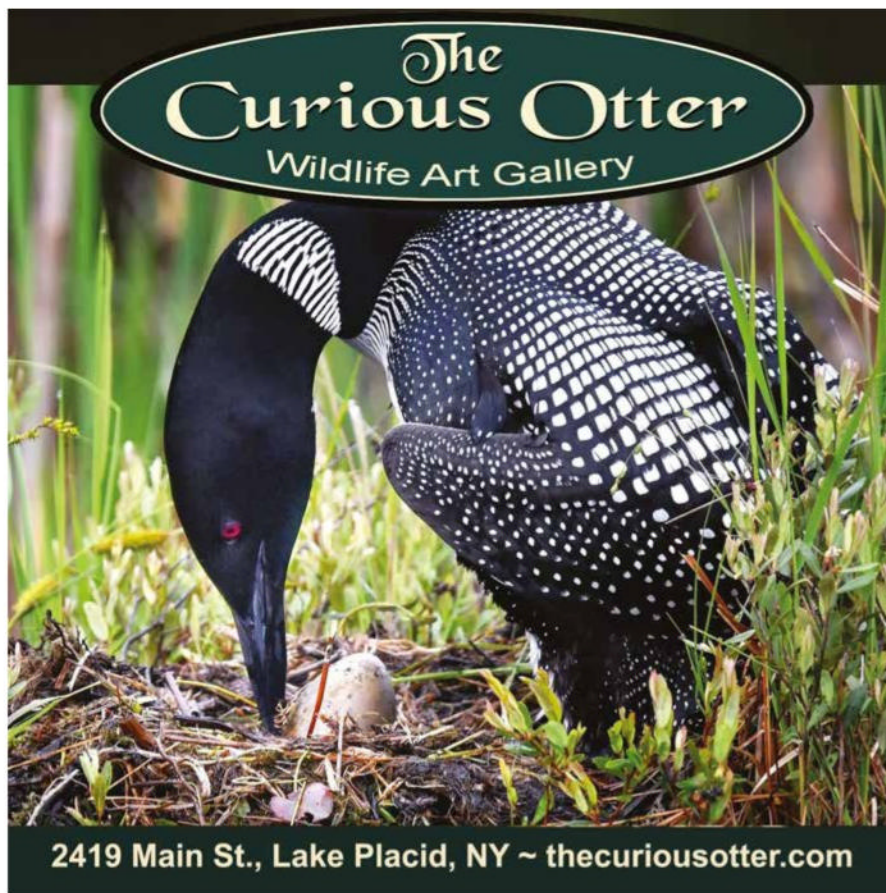
dled to an island on Lower Saranac Lake. Navigating a wild stream, fending off alders and scooching over dams was a fresh experience. "Spectacular, just like being at Disneyland," he remarked a few miles in. The comparison struck me as off, but the enthusiasm was spot on.

Despite the river's remoteness, we saw occasional reminders of civilization, such as a footbridge and the camps of the Grass River Outing Club. After three miles, we passed beneath a bridge on the old railbed, which we would later cross on our bike ride. In another mile, we came to Burnt Rock, a 25-foot cliff shooting straight out of the water, a geological curiosity in this swampy flatland. We examined fractures in the rock, imagining how it might be climbed. If the cliff were not on private land (with a posted sign nearby), we might have given it a try.

A mile below Burnt Rock, we went under a logging-road bridge. The alders began to thin out, eventually yielding to marsh grass, and as we drew near to the Grass River Flow, the grasses in turn gave way to emergent reeds. Crossing this small lake we scared a raft of ducks into flight, thereby transforming the raft into a flock. Our vista no longer constricted by alders, we observed a number of low peaks on the horizon. On the north shore was a poor fen, a wetland similar to a bog but richer in flora (so why is it poor?).

At the foot of the flow, the Grass spills over the rocky ruins of an old dam. We landed to the left, scrambled up a steep bank, crossed a logging road, and lugged and dragged our canoes down the opposite bank to calm water. The carry was a thrash, but mercifully short. The state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) could do paddlers a solid by creating a carry trail here.

The Grass below the dam differed in character from the river we had become accustomed to: it was wider, less twisty, with forested banks and fewer alders. We had less than a mile to the takeout, but twice we encountered blowdown jams blocking our passage. The first we carried around; the second we managed to squeeze past, thanks to our refined



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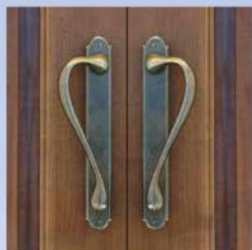
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OUTINGS

scooching skills.

At 9.5 miles, we spotted a carry sign and exited on the right bank (it's possible to paddle another half-mile downriver before reaching rocky rapids). By now, Clem was growing tired of Disneyland and wasn't thrilled when I mentioned that after a short portage we still had to paddle across Balsam Pond. "I thought we were done," he said. He brightened, however, upon seeing this little jewel glittering in the afternoon sun, adorned with yellow pond lilies. "I could do this backwards," he remarked. It took only a minute or two to paddle to the opposite shore.

At the end of another short carry through a fern-rich forest, we put down our boats and picked up our bikes. We cycled west on Route 3 (wide, good shoulder) for 1.5 miles to a logging road on easement lands, marked by a DEC sign, on the south side of the highway. Though gated, the road is open to hikers and cyclists. We followed it for 1.6 miles, paralleling the Grass, until reaching a junction with a grassy road. Here we veered left.

After four miles on the bikes, we came to a gate at the boundary between easement lands and the Grass River Outing Club. Because the state owns the former railbed, cyclists and hikers have the right to continue beyond the gate if they stay within the corridor. Pedaling along the grass-and-dirt thoroughfare, we occasionally felt a rhythmic bumping caused by buried railroad ties.

The Emporium Forestry Company built the Grasse River Railroad to haul logs, but starting in 1915, it also took passengers the 16 miles from Childwold to Cranberry Lake. The train stopped in Conifer, allowing travelers to dine at the Conifer Inn, where a breakfast of cereal, pancakes, bacon and eggs cost 50 cents or a dollar, depending on whether you were a local or a tourist. Most of the tracks were removed in the 1940s, but the train continued to run two miles between Childwold and Conifer until the late 1950s, usually at a loss. A 1957 corporate annual report poked fun at "overzealous stockholders who stubbornly continue to associate railroading

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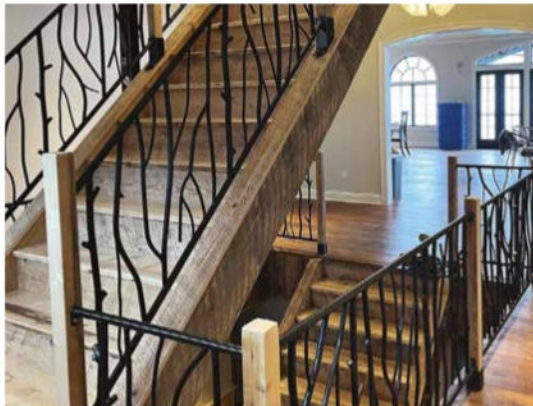
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OUTINGS

with profit."

Approaching the Massawepie Mire, we passed a sign on a tree alerting visitors to the presence of spruce grouse, which in the Adirondacks survive only in scattered patches of boreal habitat. In recent years, the DEC has tried to check the population decline by introducing birds captured in Canada and Maine. As of last year, the department had released 200 adults and 565 chicks in the Adirondacks, many of them in the mire, where they are now breeding.

Soon we emerged from the woods. At 7.3 miles, we pedaled over the Grass on the same bridge we had earlier paddled under and began traversing the peatland. Wild grasses, black spruce and tamaracks lined the way, creating a sea of green set against the blue sky. Our chances of seeing a grouse, always slim, were diminished by the condition of the railbed, many of its ties now visible. The birds sometimes bathe in the corridor's dust to get rid of lice and parasites, but the summer rains had dampened the soil and created miniature lakes.

On earlier visits, I had encountered small puddles that I was able to bike around. On this day, we had no choice but to plow through the water, which in places was deep enough to submerge our pedals. It was daunting at first, but we came to enjoy it. Tim later described our puddle pedaling as the highlight of the ride.

Eventually, we sighted dry land. At 8.6 miles, after crossing a mowed clearing, we came to a vehicle barrier. Shortly, we were back at the cars. Our adventure over, we retrieved our canoes and drove back to Saranac Lake for cocktails and conversation—a little sore and weary but with nothing to grouse about. 🌲

IF YOU GO

The Massawepie Mire combo is a paddling trip with a bike shuttle through wild lands. You leave your bike at the takeout, drive to the put-in, do the paddle, bike back to your car, and then drive to the takeout again to retrieve your canoe or kayak.

See www.adirondacklife.com, beginning on May 20, for information about the trip's takeout, put-in, paddle, bike and tips.





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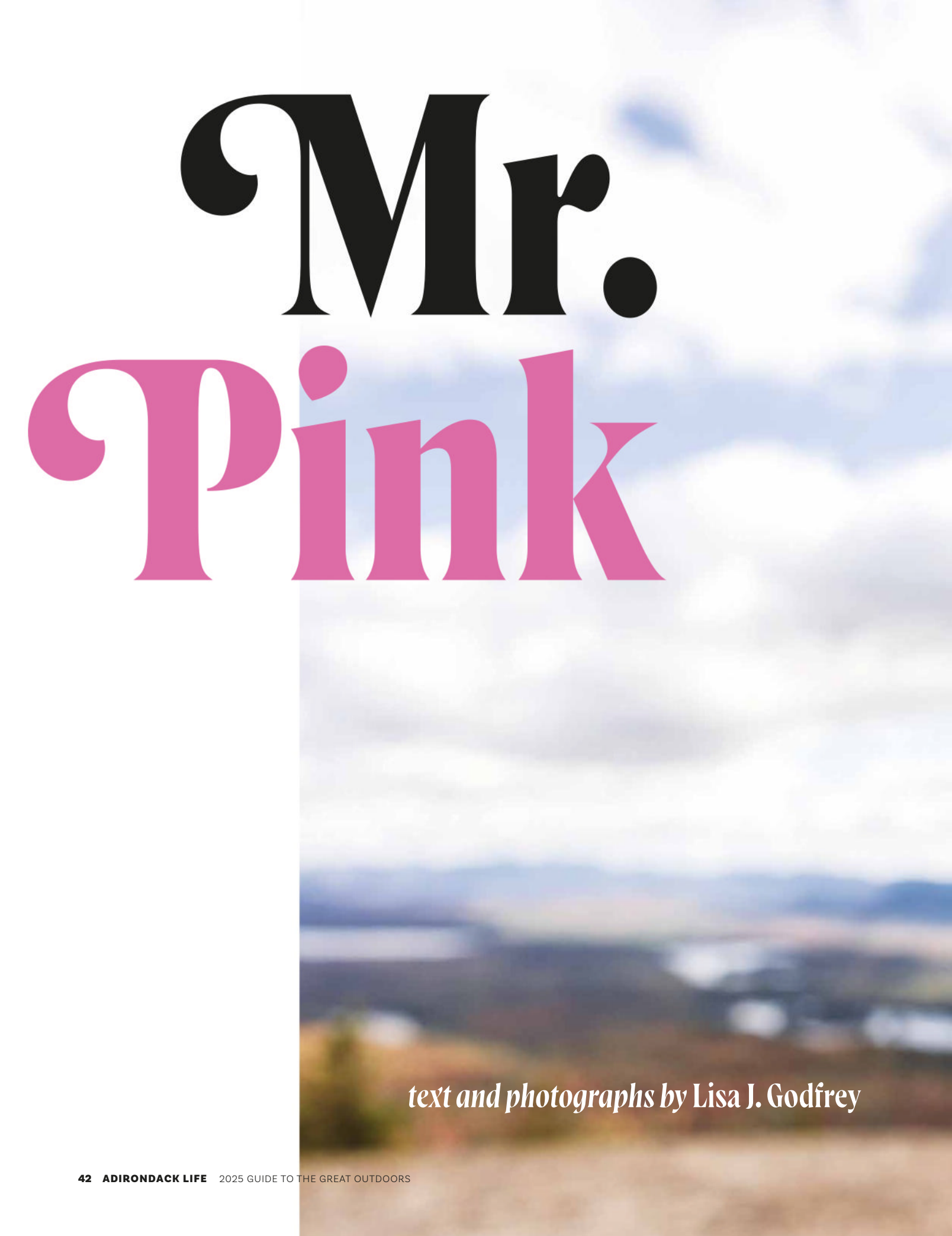
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Mr. Pink

text and photographs by Lisa J. Godfrey



Meet the
tiniest big-time
influencer in the
Adirondacks



The story of Mr. Pink begins, as so many stories do, with an unfortunate circumstance and an unexpected chain of events. It was the fall of 2020 when Mr. Pink, a diminutive creative of great heart, found himself unceremoniously surrendered to a rather grim so-called “kill shelter” in Philadelphia. Unbeknownst to me at the time, two separate friends—guided, perhaps, by the unseen hand of fate—intervened, orchestrating his passage to a far more hospitable haven: the Phoenix Animal Rescue. That fall, my partner and I contemplated an addition of something small and snuggable to our pack. It was this desire that led us to Mr. Pink.

As an animal photographer, I found his proportions particularly compelling. His tininess was, in a word, cinematic. I envisioned him as a pocket-sized explorer, peeking out from my coat or nestled in my pack, his tiny frame juxtaposed against sweeping landscapes. Of course, we already had two hiking companions, Uma and Nita—robust, adventurous and well-versed in the ways of the wilderness. But I had once encountered a caretaker at Lake Colden with a small terrier who, when fatigued, would simply retire to his owner’s backpack like some kind of noble voyager. The image stayed with me. The absurd idea of a small dog in the Adirondack wilderness was too compelling to ignore. When I announced that I had, in fact, adopted a tiny Chihuahua, my friends assumed I was joking. I was not.

And so, Mr. Pink, a three-and-three-quarters-pound Chihuahua, joined our merry pack. What followed was nothing short of an odyssey. He does everything our big dogs do—hiking, paddling, snowshoeing, camping—all with the unwavering determination of one who does not believe in their limitations. The great outdoors soothes him. Pink is, despite all odds, a true Adirondack dog. He has climbed many of our mountains and paddled our lakes—journeys that would seem improbable for a creature of his size.



Mr. Pink is the best kind of traveler: curious, adaptable, packable and eager for the next adventure. Along the way, I have made it a point to compare him to all things we encounter—the bow of a canoe, a towering peak or a pile of acorns.

Mr. Pink’s story is a tale of overcoming adversity—being discarded and forgotten to becoming cherished and celebrated. Inspired by his indomitable spirit, I created @smallest.of.the.small on Instagram—a chronicle of joy, a visual exploration from the perspective of a tiny dog exploring the huge world. ▲



Mr. Pink at Owen
Pond. PAGES 42-43:
On St. Regis Mountain.

CLOCKWISE FROM
BELOW: Mr. Pink relaxes
on Pink Pond. Camping
at Lake Lila. Post-swim
on Lake Clear.



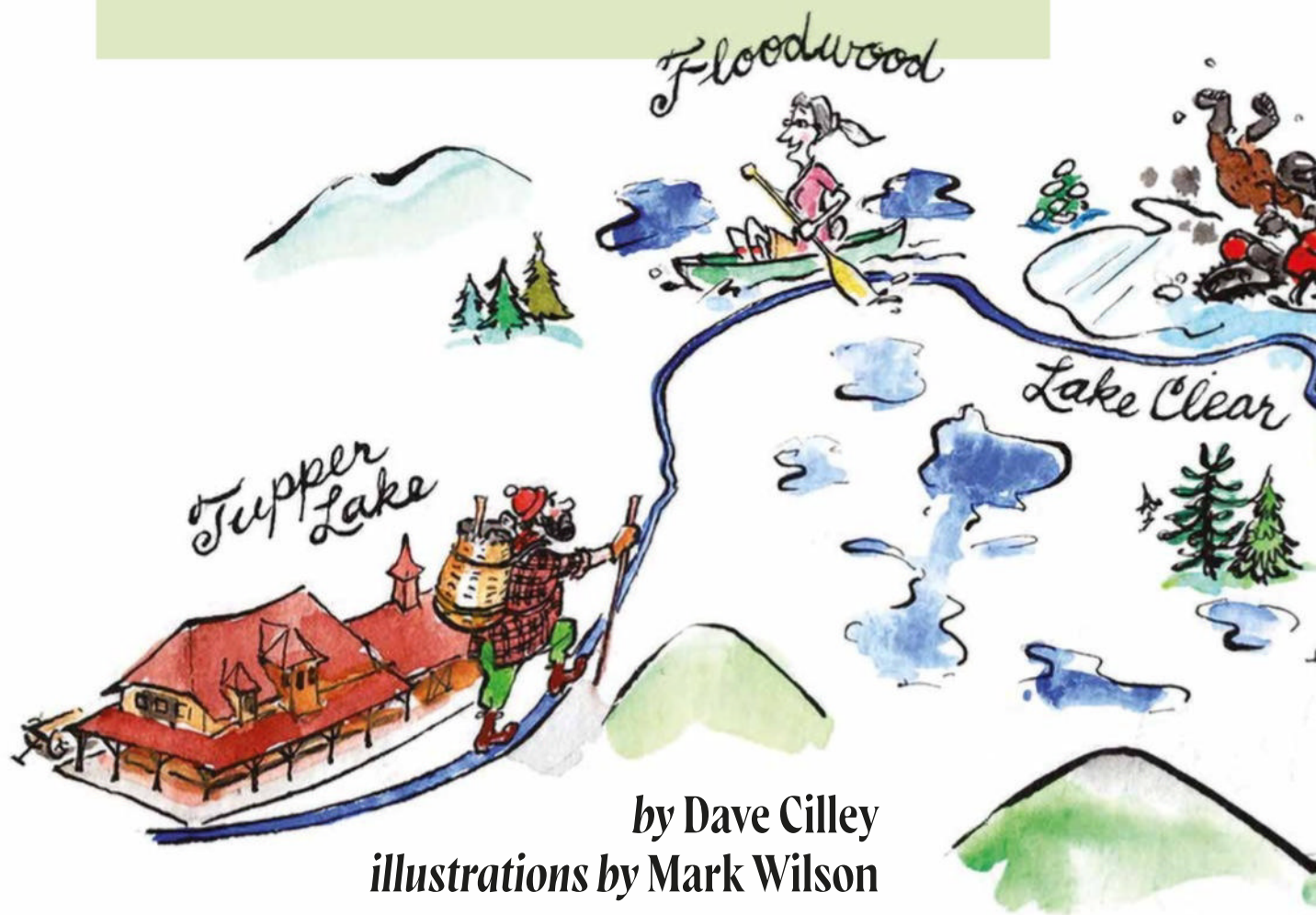


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Northern Passage

How to explore the new
Adirondack Rail Trail



by Dave Cilley
illustrations by Mark Wilson

T

he Adirondack Rail Trail is a 34-mile recreation trail—formerly a railway—connecting the villages of Lake Placid, Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake. Twenty-five miles of the trail are open to the public and the final nine-mile section is scheduled to open this fall. Mile posts/points (MP) are still a work in progress.

The trail is managed by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and

supported by the Adirondack Rail Trail Association (ARTA), an organization that promotes business and municipal interests along the trail. ARTA volunteers partner with the DEC to maintain the trail and provide visitor amenities.

Below is a starter guide for the route, with tips, day-trip ideas, rules of the road and more.

For more information visit www.adirondackrailtrail.org.

ACCESS

The best and most popular access points (east to west) are:

LAKE PLACID

The Eastern Terminus is on Station Street.

SARANAC LAKE

The Route 86 road crossing is known as Fowlers Crossing.

Union Station on Depot Street in downtown Saranac Lake.

LAKE CLEAR

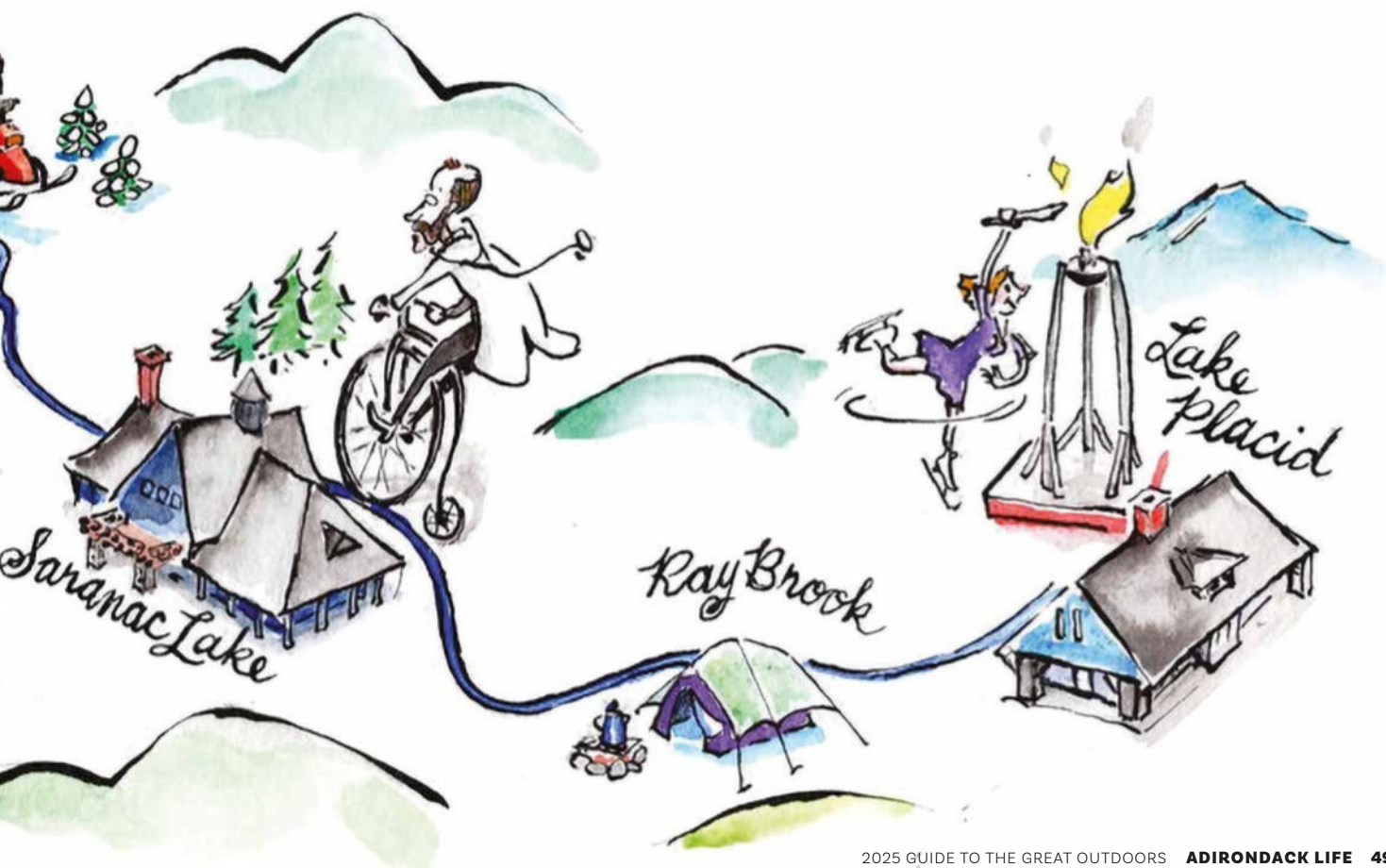
Station Street access is just west of the Adirondack Fish Hatchery (off Hatchery Road).

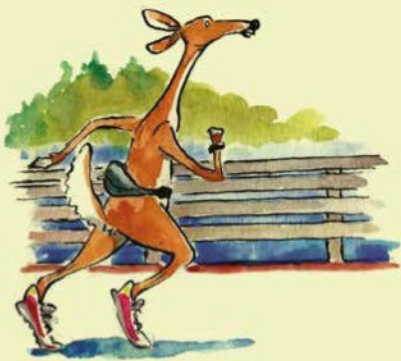
FLOODWOOD

Floodwood Road Crossing (this is a 4-mile gravel road to the access).

TUPPER LAKE

Western Terminus on Washington Street. This section is scheduled to open in the fall.





LOOPS

Possible side trips from the main trail range from paved roads to gravel paths.

Eastern Terminus Loop: At the Eastern Terminus is a 9-mile paved road loop that includes Route 73, Riverside Drive and Route 86. Counterclockwise direction is best. It parallels the West Branch of the Ausable River.

Bloomingdale Loop: From Saranac Lake, a 16-mile loop travels north to Bloomingdale via Route 3, Bloomingdale Road and Route 86, with great views from Harrietstown Hill. Donnelly's Ice Cream stand makes this a fun summer side trip. A Bloomingdale Bog variation cuts 2 miles and a hill out of the trip, but includes a 4-mile gravel run through a quiet valley.

Floodwood Mountain Loop: From Floodwood Crossing (MP 25.2), there is a 7-mile gravel loop that leads west and returns to the rail trail near MP 27. This loop passes a trailhead to a hike up Floodwood Mountain (2 miles round-trip).

MULTI-DAY OUTINGS

Two Days Cycling

A convenient 2-day trip is to base yourself in Saranac Lake. Day 1 would consist of a trip to Lake Placid and return (18–22 miles). The next day offers two choices, both out-and-back trips: you can bike to either the Lake Clear area (12–20 miles) or to the Floodwood area and return (about 30 miles). As soon as the trail to Tupper Lake is completed, an additional option is to pedal to Tupper Lake and return (a total of 50 miles), or take a shuttle to return to Saranac Lake for a 25-mile day.

Three Days Cycling plus Hiking or Paddling

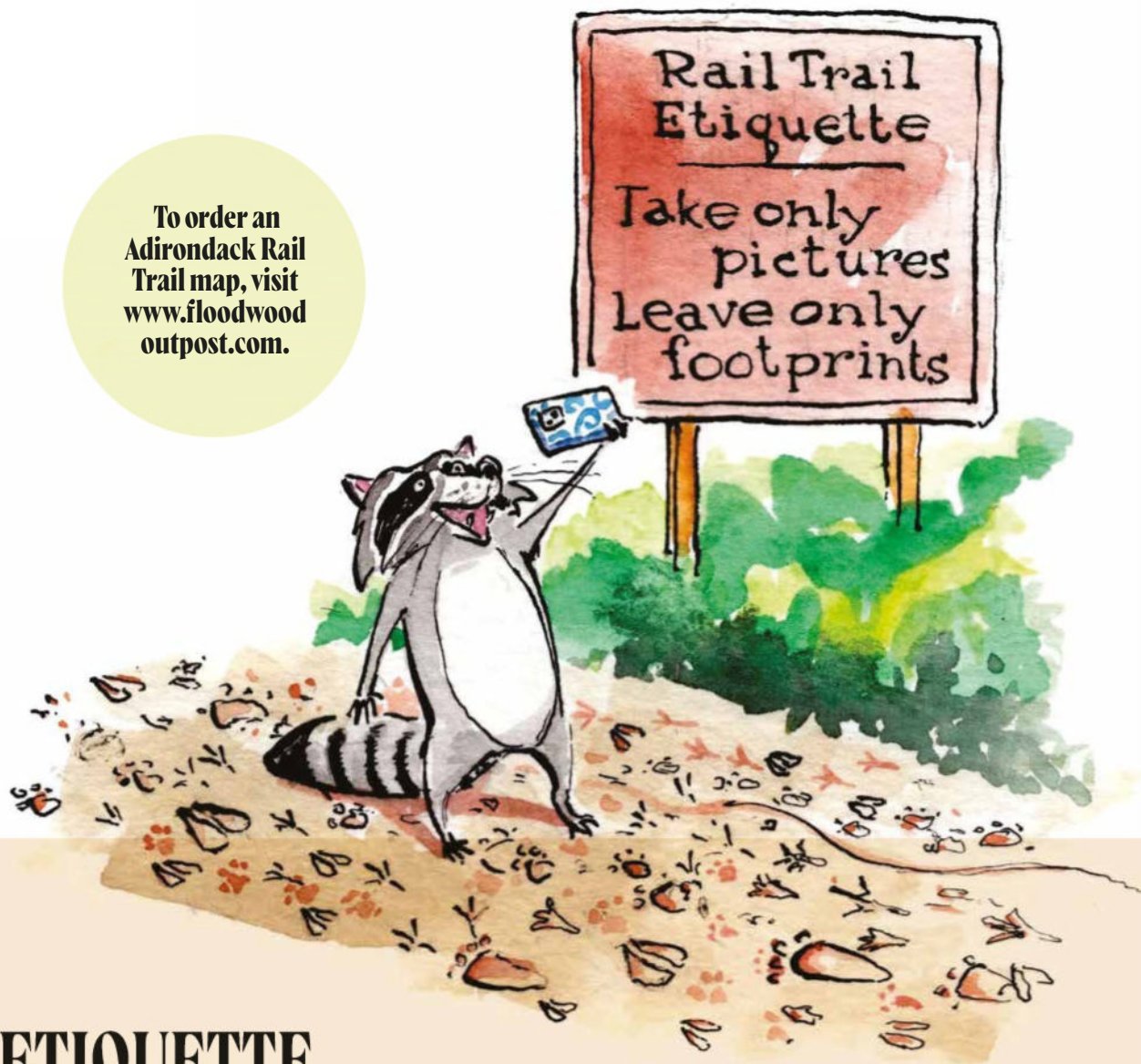
Bike from Lake Placid to Saranac Lake in the morning, then take an afternoon hike up Mount Baker (1.5–2 hours) or a 2-hour lake or river trip by canoe or kayak. After a night in Saranac Lake, bike to Sunday Pond Bed & Breakfast (518-891-1531, www.sundaypond.com) with optional bike loops or time at the beach to relax. Bike to Tupper Lake on Day 3, with an optional hike up Floodwood Mountain.

Overnight Multisport

For dedicated multi-sport campers, it's possible to paddle from Saranac Lake to Tupper Lake and arrange to pedal back to Saranac Lake on the Rail Trail. Allow 4 to 5 days on average. (See shuttles sidebar on page 53.)



To order an
Adirondack Rail
Trail map, visit
[www.floodwood
outpost.com](http://www.floodwoodoutpost.com).



ETIQUETTE

- In summer, the trail is open to pedestrians and bicycles (including Class I e-bikes). In winter, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, fat-tire biking and snowmobiling are allowed.
- Individuals and groups must travel to the right. Bikes should yield to walkers, runners and pedestrians. When passing others, respect slower users by slowing down—a simple “on your left” helps.
- Cyclists should carry a signaling device, such as a bell or horn.
- If operating a motorized vehicle on the trail, slow down—a wave of recognition shows respect. Observe speed limits (15 mph in congested areas).
- If your pet is with you, immediately clean up (and carry out) your friend’s mess.
- Practice Leave No Trace

NUTS & BOLTS

- The route’s elevation averages about 1,500’ above the Champlain Valley, so temperatures might be cooler than expected.
- The trail runs mainly east to west and can be done in either direction. Although the trail is an old railbed, cyclists find that it slopes down slightly from Lake Placid to Saranac Lake and from Lake Clear to Saranac Lake.
- Carry a small pack with the basics of a windshell, rain gear, a fleece, lightweight helmet liner, gloves, a first-aid kit and basic bike repair equipment. Always carry water.
- The trail intersects with roads—some busy—and cross-road traffic does not stop. Bikes should be walked when crossing.

BIKE SUPPLIES & RENTALS

Bike Lake Placid Rail Trail Rentals

Traditional and e-bike rentals at 455 Old Military Road, in Lake Placid. (518) 354-0777
www.bikelakeplacid.us

High Peaks Cyclery

Sales, service, lodging and traditional and e-bike rentals at 2377 Main Street, in Lake Placid. (518) 523-3764
www.highpeakscyclery.com

Placid Planet Bicycles

Sales, service and wide range of traditional and e-bike rentals at 2242 Saranac Avenue, in Lake Placid. (518) 523-4128
www.placidplanet.com

Silver Birch Cycles

Traditional, e-bike and e-cargo bike rentals, mobile bike repair service at 77 Main Street, in Saranac Lake. Will provide delivery of rentals. (518) 354-8497
www.silverbirchcycles.com

Gear-to-go Tandems

Bike tours, tandem bike sales and service at 1 Dahinda Road, in Saranac Lake. (518) 354-3102
www.gtgtandems.com

Sled and Spoke

E-bike rentals at 255 Broadway, in Saranac Lake. (518) 205-7864
www.sledandspoke.com



FOOD

LAKE PLACID

Lisa G's. American food and a patio 0.4 mile east of MP 0/Eastern Terminus on Station Street. (518) 523-2093, www.lisags.com

Big Slide Brewery. About a mile south of MP 0 on Route 73. (518) 523-7844, bigslidebrewery.com

RAY BROOK

Tail of the Pup. BBQ and seafood at 1186 Route 86, near MP 4.7. (518) 891-0777
www.tailofthepupbbq.com

SARANAC LAKE

The Belvedere Restaurant. Just east of the Bloomingdale Avenue crossing, near MP 9.5. (518) 354-5402
www.thebelvederestaurant.com

Bitters & Bones. Pub fare with outside dining at 65 Broadway, near

MP 9.5. (518) 354-8270
www.bittersandbones.com

Floodwood Outpost. Snacks, ice cream, books and maps, camping supplies, paddling and cycling accessories, repair stand and hand pump at Floodwood Road Crossing, MP 25.2. (518) 891-8040
www.floodwoodoutpost.com

Nori's Village Market & Riverside Cafe. Sandwiches, salads, healthy snacks and baked goods at 138 Church Street (corner of Church and Woodruff Streets). (518) 891-6079, norisvillagemarket.com

TUPPER LAKE

Larkins Deli & Bakery. At 58 Main Street, just south of the railroad station/Western Terminus. (518) 359-9000, on Facebook

Raquette River Brewing. A half-mile west on Route 3 from MP 33.6 and the railroad station. (518) 359-5219, www.raquetteriverbrewing.com

LODGING

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Hotel Saranac

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The Ashley, 185 River Street, Saranac
Lake. (518) 891-0922
www.theashleyadk.com

Charlie's Inn

44 Junction Road, Lake Clear. Laundry,
bathrooms, showers, restaurant and
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www.newyorksnowmobiling.com

Hohmeyer's Lake Clear Lodge & Resort

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1489, www.lakeclearlodge.com

Sunday Pond Bed & Breakfast

5544 Route 30, Saranac Lake, with a
glamping option, just west of MP 19.
(518) 891-1531, www.sundaypond.com

Sunset Park Motel, 71 Demars Bou-
levard, Tupper Lake, less than a mile
south of the Western Terminus.
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www.sunsetparkmotel.com



SHUTTLES

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www.canoeoutfitters.com

CAMPING

Meadowbrook Campground, in
Ray Brook, at MP 4.7. Open May
16–September 1. Same day reser-
vations until 5 p.m.; no walk-ins.
www.reserveamerica.com

Charlie's Inn and Junction

Campground, Lake Clear, at
MP 15.5. Open May–October.
Laundry, bathrooms, showers,
restaurant & bar. (518) 891-9858
www.newyorksnowmobiling.com

**Rollins Pond and Fish Creek
Ponds Campgrounds**, between
Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake.
Open May 16–September 7.
www.reserveamerica.com

**Little Wolf Beach and Camp-
ground**, near MP 33, in Tupper
Lake. (518) 817-6019
www.tupperlake.com

Backcountry camping: Camp-
sites that are vehicle accessible
on or near the Rail Trail, including
10 sites at Little Green Pond
near MP 19, and 16 sites along
Floodwood Road, cannot be
reserved. Camping is permitted
for up to 3 nights without a
permit. Longer stays require a
permit from a forest ranger; visit
dec.ny.gov to learn more.

Wild or “at large” camping is
allowed on state land (except
where posted as prohibited).
General rules are that you must
camp at least 150 feet back
from a road, trail, campsites
or water source. For more on
camping in the St. Regis Canoe
Area, see www.dec.ny.gov.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a red and white plaid shirt and dark pants, is hugging a large, textured tree trunk in a forest. She has her eyes closed and a smile on her face. The background is filled with green foliage and sunlight filtering through the trees.

Insiders Outside

Three adventurous
Adirondackers share
their most epic
treks, memorable
encounters and
advice for playing
in the park



Megan Phillips

KEENE

OCCUPATION: Land-use planner and environmental protector for New York State.

MODE OF RECREATION: Solo canoe, hiking boots, trail-running shoes, cross-country skis.

HIT LIST

Essex Chain Lakes by canoe

You may need a break on the carry from the parking for Deer Pond, but once you get to Third Lake, the lakes are connected and your carrying is complete. The best campsites and mellower vibes are on Fourth and Sixth Lakes. Be careful in the “tube” between Fourth and Fifth—I witnessed a comical yet unfortunate canoe capsize while navigating it. I have seen the wild orchid rose pogonia in bloom on Third Lake. While sleeping in our tent on Fourth Lake, my partner, Mike, woke me up with, “There’s something out there.” My first thought was whether he meant this in some kind of X-Files context, but I quickly realized he meant a bear. I thought about the barbecue and rice we had made for dinner, and whether a stray dirty spoon might not have made its way into the bear canister. Less than an hour later—but it felt longer—the bear had moved on and we drifted back to sleep.

Hiking in the Champlain Valley

Around Mother’s Day you can find me fawning over hepatica, trillium, Dutchman’s breeches, bloodroot, trout lily, Jack-in-the-pulpit and more. Preserves owned by local land trusts—Adirondack Land Trust, Champlain Area Trails—are some of my favorite places to flower-gaze, including the Westport Nature Preserve and North and South Boquet Mountain trails.

Hurricane Mountain

If this mountain were a person, I’d have a lock of its hair in a locket around my

neck. In early 2021, I ascended Hurricane Mountain for the first time. The night before I had made an offer on a house in Keene, and I was glued to my phone waiting for a counter offer. When I reached the summit, I got a text from my Realtor that the seller had countered, as expected. It was a single-digit day, maybe colder on the exposed and windy summit, and I removed my gloves for only a moment to type what I hoped would be an acceptable counter. By the time I was off the mountain, the negotiation was complete and I would soon be moving from my home in Albany to become a full-time resident of the park. I was practically vibrating with the anticipation of what was to come.

Pharaoh Lake Wilderness on foot and by canoe

This past summer my partner and I were training for a major canoe trip and we practiced by carrying our lightweight solo canoes—I have a Hornbeck and he has a Northstar—the 3.5 or so miles from the southern entrance to the outlet of the lake. The carry is on an old roadbed so the grades and terrain were manageable, and, much to our relief, the bridge over the second brook crossing was recently replaced—rock-hopping with a full pack and a canoe on my shoulders seemed daunting. We spent the night in a lean-to on the western side of the outlet and ventured out the next day for a circumnavigation of the lake, a picnic at one of my favorite peninsula campsites, and a swim. After visiting this area dozens of times for camping trips and half-marathon trail runs, it was a treat to experience it from the water.

Boreas Ponds by canoe

There aren’t any campsites built yet around the ponds—there are some on the Gulf Brook Road, including accessible sites—but you don’t need more than a day to explore the ponds, take in the

Megan Phillips
with Anne LaBastille’s
favorite tree
at Twitchell Lake.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MEGAN PHILLIPS

spectacular scenery and watch herons from the cotton sedges nodding in the breeze. From the closest parking area at Four Corners, the carry is less than a mile. Watch for snapping turtles burying eggs in the loose sand by the dam.

ADVICE

Always be ready for and open to a swim.

Regarding headlamps: The late Robbi Mecus (an incredible forest ranger) always said, “Two is one and one is none.” So bring that extra headlamp, you never know when you might need it.

A thermos of coffee helps you power through a long outing, especially in winter. Coffee has carried me through many “last miles,” when I had nothing left in the tank.

On a multi-day outing, don’t forget dessert. Jiffy Pop is a pro-tip for a late-night snack if you’re having a campfire.

Leave No Trace. Pretend each campsite you visit is part of a vetted community like AirBnB and your rating is at stake. My partner even goes the extra mile to leave firewood that he harvested (dead and down only!) wrapped up in a piece of birch bark for the next person to use.

See a gorgeous wildflower, a rare plant or a cool mushroom? Leave it there. But send me the coordinates so I can go and check it out!

Two words: wool underwear. It will change your life and can double as a swimsuit in a pinch.

Know when to turn around or cash it in for the day. I have retreated off Marcy in the winter when I was within tenths of a mile of the summit, due to poor visibility. I have pitched a tent at noon on a canoe trip when the winds, rain and temperatures made conditions unsafe. There’s always going to be another day in the woods, and you probably want to be there for it.

Setting off fireworks or playing loud music from a campsite kills the vibe for other recreationists. Many folks go into the woods for a respite from the stimulation of everyday life, not to hear your Spotify Wrapped playlist. The loons, owls and frogs are a better soundtrack.

Katie Tyler on Basin Mountain and her snap of Saddleback Mountain.



Kathryn “Katie” Tyler SARANAC LAKE

OCCUPATION: Department of Environmental Conservation Interior Outpost Caretaker.

MODE OF RECREATION: Wide backcountry telemarks and skins, or well broken-in hiking boots with ankle support, and my old roller blades on the new Rail Trail.

WILD WORK

I have spent 14 years as caretaker at High Peaks outposts Marcy Dam, Johns Brook and Lake Colden. I’m now posted at Raquette Falls, where, the joke is, “All old caretakers go to die!” From wear and tear, I suppose.

Hiking yourself and supplies miles into your post, regardless of storms, floods, blowdowns or blown-out wa-

ter crossings, can be an adventure. Once in, the work is mostly routine: trail, campsite, outpost maintenance, and yes, we dig privies! Another task is hiker education and enforcement of the rules, which I try to be very kind about doing. We are also on call 24 hours a day by radio for rescues, so evening rounds and talking to as many hikers as possible is important. Knowing where hikers’ base camp is—and checking in on where they are planning to go—can keep people from tackling too much, and knowing their planned route is helpful if someone does get into trouble.

Most rescue calls aren’t more than a long hike to find someone overdue or lost. Sprains, dehydration, lack of headlamps and warm gear are too



common. We recertify our medical training regularly and always carry radio and basic first-aid gear, water and snacks.

Two rescues I don't mind remembering include a solo hiker who had lost the trail in winter, below Marcy's summit, and had set off an emergency beacon. I started for her from Lake Colden as fast as one can go on snowshoes, but it was nearly dark, white-out conditions, and very windy before I got to the location where dispatch thought she should be. It took a lot of yelling—I can be loud—until I finally got an answering yell from down in a tree well, where she had fallen. We were both relieved.

Another was a dislocated shoulder at Johns Brook Lodge—very painful—and he really wanted me to do something about it. I had never relocated a shoulder before, and was hesitant to try. But he was brave and it worked. (He tried to give me his brand-new hiking boots as a thank you.)

ENCOUNTERS

It is always nice to run into friends on the trail and especially nice when someone remembers you from an earlier encounter. But most of the time you are alone, so the quiet, scenery, ever-changing sky and clouds are truly a pleasure. The pine martens marking the trail for me. The deer watching as I pass (who can be quieter?). The coyote swimming the river just ahead. Or the little bear cub I am backing away from because I can't see where Mama is. Who is more scared, cub or me?

Once, I tried to chase down a snowshoeless postholer, who was sinking every step, hip-deep, during a snowstorm. I was sure this person was—or would soon be—in trouble. Coming across a bit of fabric half-covered in new snow, I expected the worst. What I uncovered was: a new tent, sleeping bag, plastic tarp, camp stove, cooking pot, underwear and bacon and eggs, but no hiker. After aban-

doning all this stuff to lighten the load—and for me to clean up—this postholer luckily made it out without help.

CALAMITIES

Long ago, as an assistant forest ranger, I fell into Johns Brook at high-water stage with a heavy pack on. I was swept over a mini-waterfall, pushed up against a boulder, and it was very hard to get out. Ever since, crossing ice or high water, I now just slip off a shoulder strap, and I'm sure to have a stick or pole in hand.

ADVICE

Volunteer for trail work, for groups like the Adirondack 46ers or Lean2Rescue.

Sign the registers and know the rules and regulations. And in the Adirondacks, phones can't be relied upon for anything—not for emergencies, navigation or as a headlamp.

See you in the backcountry!



Kristi Brennan
and Flash at Clear
Pond lean-to. Fol-
low Kristi's adven-
tures @kelhiker.

Kristi Brennan

KEESEVILLE

OCCUPATION: Fundraising.

MODE OF RECREATION: Hiking boots, but also boots attached to skis, snowshoes or microspikes during the snowy months. I'm also relearning the joy of attaching my feet to bike pedals while I navigate smooth and flowy beginner mountain-bike trails.

MAIN HIKING PARTNER: Flash, who is a seven-and-a-half-year-old doggo. He is half golden retriever and half pain in the backside (aka blue heeler). Flash herds me while we are on the trail, he nips my ankles if I'm off the trail, and I have—always when other hikers are passing—implored him to please just be normal. He has yet to comply.

HIT LIST

Black River Wild Forest

In the off-season, after the gate has been closed on Mill Creek Road, I'll mountain-bike to the hiking trail, stash my bike in the woods, then continue to the lean-to on foot. There's great swimming near the lean-to and I'm almost guaranteed that I'll have the place to myself.

Dix Mountain Wilderness

Bushwhacking with friends is one of my favorite things. An especially memorable winter 'whack was up Spotted Mountain. This was, for me, a tough hike, but the feeling of accomplishment on summiting—and the views—were enough to make me weep with gratitude that the Adirondack Park exists.

Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness

Middle Settlement Lake lean-to. You can thank me later.

Pharaoh Lake Wilderness

I love this wilderness area! My favorite way to spend a day here is to summit Treadway Mountain. On my way back down I'll take a side-trip to my adopted lean-to at Clear Pond. If it's warm, Flash

and I will cool off with a dip in the pond. In winter I'll make a fire in the pit, boil water for coffee, then snuggle into my sleeping bag to watch Wilderness TV.

West Canada Lake Wilderness

Snowy Mountain is one of my favorite fire tower hikes. Not because of the tower, but because once you're on the summit, a couple of short paths will take you to the backside of the mountain, where the views are spectacular.

MOST EPIC ADVENTURE

A half-formed idea from my friend Dan began with, "Let's 'whack McNaughton," and then it became, "Let's 'whack McNaughton from Upper Works," and finally ended on, "Let's canoe Henderson, stash the boat, sleep at the lean-to, go up and over McNaughton with full packs, then spend our second night camping at Wallface Ponds. The next day we'll hike out via Indian Pass Trail, find the canoe, and paddle back. You in?"

An Adirondack adventure with unknown variables? Oh heck, yes. I'm in!

And, together with another friend, Jenn, we did it. We canoed across Henderson and found the lean-to occupied, so we slept beneath a tarp. On our way up McNaughton we navigated over and under downed trees, splashed through creek beds, laughed and groaned.

Finally, the pine trees spit us onto the summit and the rain began. Just a bit at first, then much more while we tried to locate the "trail" to Wallface Ponds. Then Mother Nature bellowed, "MORE RAIN," and the skies complied, and by the time we reached the ponds, we were bedraggled, sodden and slightly less joyous than we had been at the start of the day.

At the ponds, we voted to cancel sleeping under a tarp, instead pressing on to Scott Clearing lean-to. The trail was wet—up-to-your-ankles, running-water wet. We squelched, tucked ourselves deeper into our rain gear and

trudged until we reached the lean-to.

We changed into dry clothes, tossed our sleeping bags onto the floor, and burrowed ourselves in. We were too tired to heat up dinner, so we cobbled together a cold meal. We didn't talk—chewing our food was the most we could manage.

After sitting in silence and looking through the curtains of rain, one of us asked, "Is it hiker midnight yet?" We agreed that there was no shame in calling it a day. At 7 p.m.

The next morning Dan made three cups of coffee without leaving his sleeping bag. Then we hoisted our damp packs and our sore selves, and began the hike down Indian Pass. We found the canoe, paddled back across Henderson Lake, and said goodbye to one another in the Upper Works parking lot.

Adventure weekends like that always feel so long, but it was just two nights plus a day and a half. I love how the Adirondacks are not only my six-million-acre backyard, but also my time machine.

ENCOUNTERS

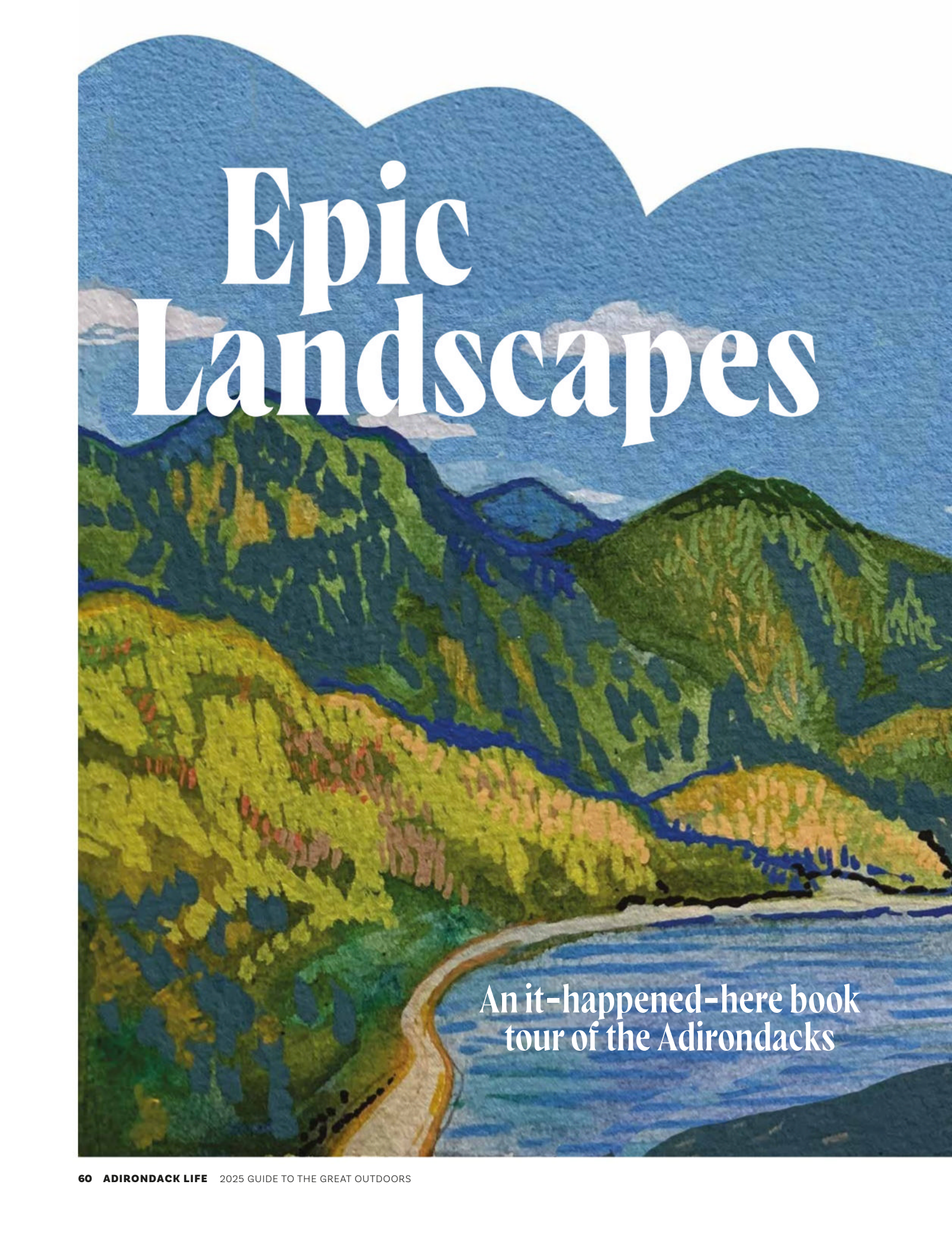
Facing down a bear, not once, not twice, but three times in the wee hours at a Lake Colden campsite. This bear had successfully opened our bear canister. Thankfully he left us our dehydrated meals and only took off with our GORP so we could finish our trip.

ADVICE

Have fun. Make mistakes. Learn from your mistakes.

Be informed—join social-media hiking groups, sign up for Department of Environmental Conservation emails, know and practice the seven principles of Leave No Trace.

Laugh, cry, revel in the beauty. After all, how lucky are we to have all of this—sweeps hands across the entire Adirondacks—for free? 🌲



Epic Landscapes

An it-happened-here book
tour of the Adirondacks



T

THE FOLLOWING NOVELS span three centuries, and for subject, voice and readership, they are worlds apart. But one thing they have in common: they, or a chunk of them, are in the Adirondacks and they put the woods to use. For all the micro-settings in these books (farm, fort, motor court, Great Camp, lake, summer camp or sanatorium), it is the wilderness around that raises hopes of some fresh start. Maybe it's a romance, good health, an abolitionist's subsistence farm on the frontier. It doesn't matter. It will not take. The wilderness has ideas of its own. The people in these books suppose the Adirondacks' distance from the cares and claims of daily life promises a respite, an escape. But the world pursues them anyway. And it always, always catches up.

As we hope these novels catch up with you, good reader, in the deep shade of a warm day, while everybody else is outside picking blueberries, hiking, kayaking and missing all the fun.

by Amy Godine
illustrations by Nip Rogers

LAKE GEORGE

FORT. WILLIAM HENRY



The Last of the Mohicans

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER. 1826

SENIOR ENGLISH. Was that when you were supposed to read it? The first Great American Novel. But did you ever? All of it? Thought so. Well, time to buckle down. Cooper's wartime romance more than pinned the Adirondacks to the heart of the nation's narrative, it made the wilderness itself a character—as memorable as the Mohican Chingachgook, and pitiless as the Huron chief Magua. The wilderness, in fact, was what moved Cooper to write the book. So smitten was he by his first view of the waterfall and hidden cave at Glen's Falls, he resolved to write a saga whose drama and propulsion matched the cataract itself.

Which is still right there, of course, just where he saw it, but crowded now, corralled by industry, a dam, a hydroelectric plant, a spillway. Maybe best to spare yourself the sight and forego the dozen-some movie versions, too, and instead honor Cooper's masterpiece with the deep reading the 200-year-old yarn deserves.

Loon Lake

E. L. DOCTOROW. 1980

IT WAS THE PLACE NAME, not the reality, of Franklin County's Loon Lake that so captivated E. L. Doctorow he named a novel for it and made a Great Camp in the Adirondack woods a backdrop for a good piece of this bestseller. What he fell for was an aura, a mystique, an idea of a complete retreat so little known it could at once menace and enchant.

Joe Paterson, the wily roustabout and hobo at the heart of this rich book, falls hard for Adirondack Country, too. Lost and adrift on a railroad embankment near Loon Lake, he sees a train approaching and in the window of a slow-moving private railcar, a woman, very blonde, very naked, and holding up a dress. And then she's gone, but—"oh, my lords and ladies!"—in this vision Joe has discovered exactly what he needs. The woman? Well, yes, obviously, but even more exciting, more intoxicating, is what she stands for. Wealth! Confidence! Entitlement and Power! All awaiting him in the Great Camp where

she abides, the mistress of the mysterious tycoon who hires him to labor on the grounds and to learn just how far an ill-made fortune can go.

The story will stray a distance from the portentous woods, landing Joe in small-town Pennsylvania, an Indiana auto plant, a jail cell, and worse. But this novel is named *Loon Lake* for a reason. See it through, you'll get your second chance to stretch out in the trophy room with the lakeside view under antlered chandeliers.

An American Tragedy

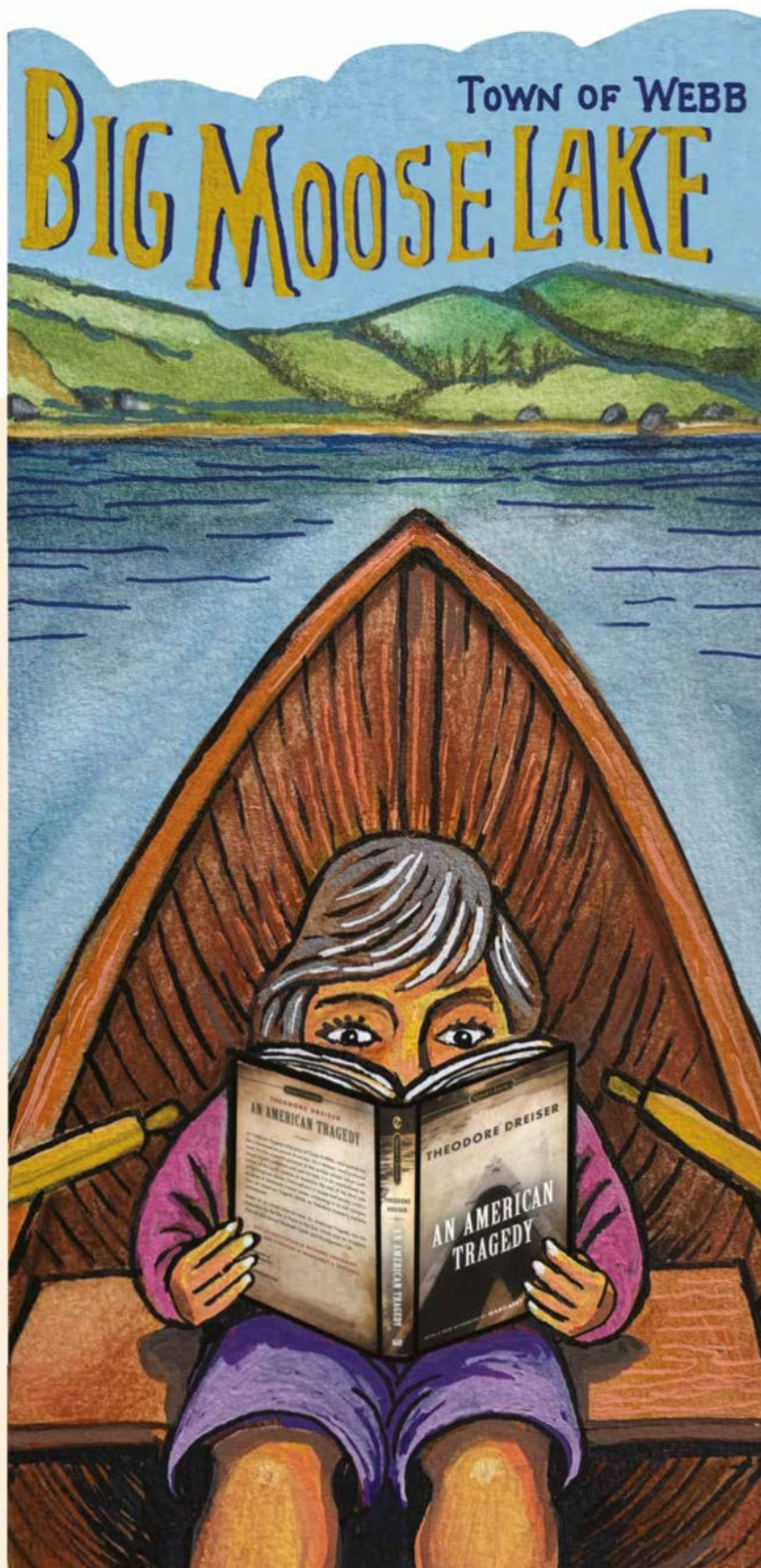
THEODORE DREISER. 1925

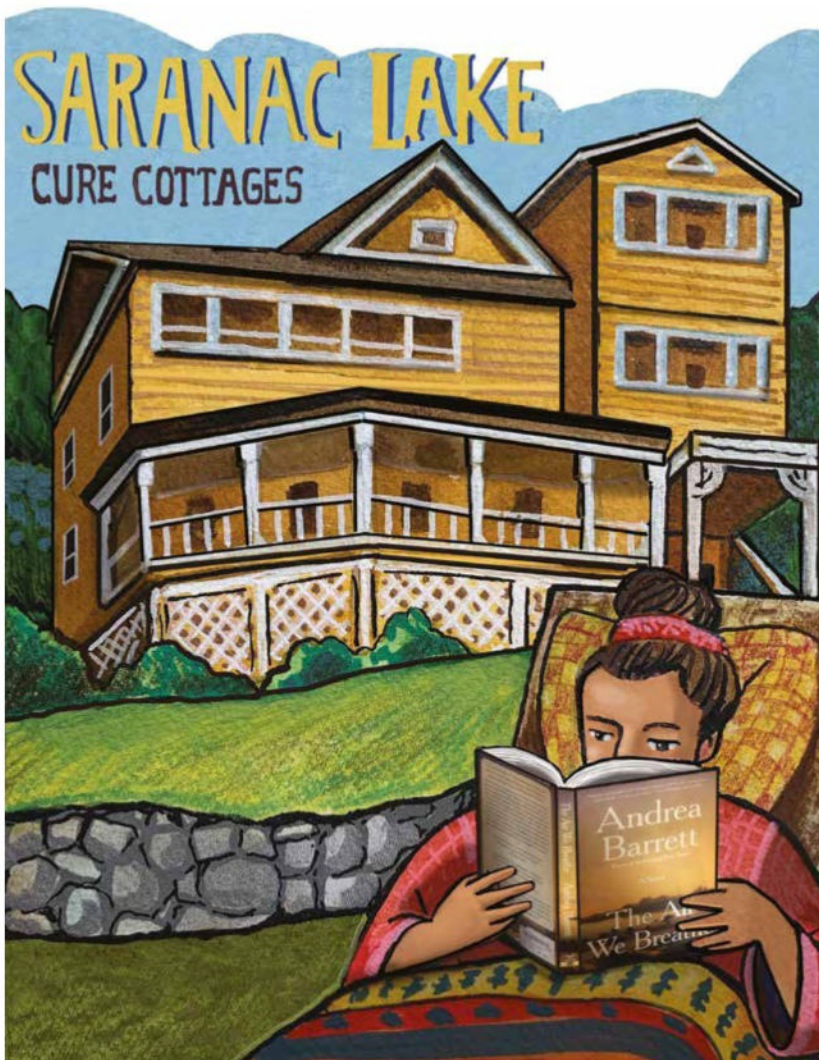
WHY HAVEN'T WE ALL READ THIS BOOK?

Isn't it high time? Isn't it enough that *Time* named it one of the hundred best books of all time despite the fact that Dreiser, "line for line ... takes a pipe fitter's approach to writing, joining workmanlike sentences one to the other"? Yes, some sentences are clunky and take some getting used to. Deal with it.

An American Tragedy broke more ground than an asteroid. Dreiser took a tabloid headline, the 1906 murder of a young mill worker, Grace Brown, by her fiancé, Chester Gillette, at Big Moose Lake in the southwestern Adirondacks, and spun it into an 800-page brief for this murderer's humanity. Not his lovability. About Gillette, or the fictional version, Clyde Griffiths, there's nothing lovable at all. But never mind, says Dreiser. We don't have to like the hero. But we do need to know him. What were the influences—the distracted parents, inept educators, feckless friends, worldly enticements—that hobbled his capacity for empathy? What whittled out his heart?

Maybe the real American tragedy, Dreiser offers, is the neglect and atrophy of conscience before it ever has a chance to form.





The Air We Breathe

ANDREA BARRETT. 2007

THE ADIRONDACKS STANDS for respite and recovery in Andrea Barrett's 2007 historical novel, *The Air We Breathe*. At a state-run TB sanatorium in Tamarack Lake, a regimen of sunbathing, fresh air and ample food is the daily fare of the afflicted, many of them foreign-born, and sometimes the rest cure lives up to its name. But coffins still leave town on the night train. Recovery is far from assured.

That's one drama of this elegant and thoughtful novel—how the patients field their lonesomeness so far from home and their anxiety about the illness that could claim them any day. Another pestilence is subtler, and worse because so unexpected. Worries about an “enemy within,” roused by the United States’ decision to enter World War I in 1916, have brought the sanatorium under scrutiny. Who might be the agitators, spies or traitors in its wards? When a hometown patriot suspects a young convalescing Russian of criminal activities, the presumption of complicity drifts like a contagion. The air we breathe, the author intimates, not only brings those healthful mountain breezes. It bears the toxic gossip that betrays.

The Spy Who Loved Me

IAN FLEMING. 1962

THIS IS A WICKED cheesy, ill-made novel, bloated with needless exposition, wafer-thin on plot, with a pair of doofy villains straight outta *Hustler* crossed with *Mad* magazine. James Bond himself doesn't make an appearance until two-thirds in. (Did Fleming fear his man would die of boredom if he checked in any sooner?) Little wonder that when it came to the film, the author forbade the use of any part of this story except its name.

Still, it is a kick hanging out with the book's Viv Michel, the novel's Vespa-loving French-Canadian narrator and the first and only female to narrate a Bond novel. Gorgeous, broke, a bit adrift, she's managing the Dreamy Pines Motor Court outside Lake George, when some bad guys pay a visit. The Englishman comes knocking just in time. Seems his Thunderbird has had “a puncture.” Might Dreamy Pines have a room? Let's just say that things for Val proceed, and fast, from very bad to good to unspeakably, life-changingly sublime.

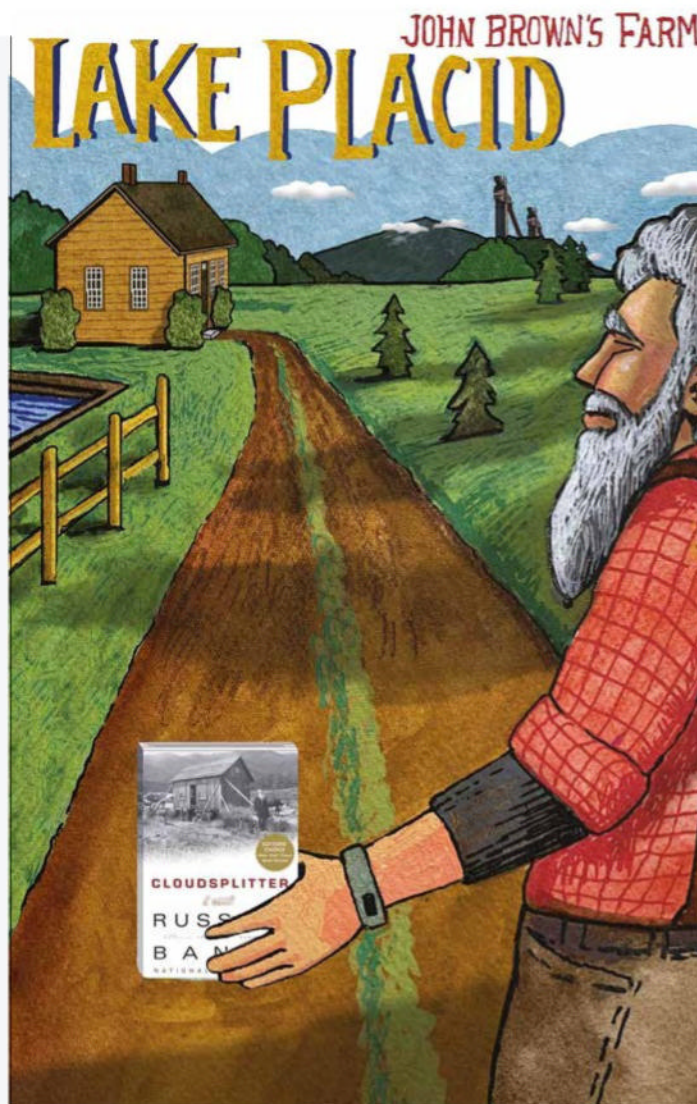
Fleming briefly saw some of the eastern Adirondacks in the mid-1950s, and there might have been a second visit, too. Was he smitten? I'm thinking not. The “endless vista of pine trees” strikes Viv as so monotonous, it's “positively sickening,” and the upstate tourist scene leaves her cold as well, though quainter features are amusing. “Mock Indian tourist reservations.” The Philco telly. The Olsonite Pearlescent toilet seat. Those blushing bars of pink Camay. Viv's a snark, but for the minute it takes to read this book, she's good company. Just ask the spy who loved her.

Cloudsplitter

RUSSELL BANKS. 1998

RUSSELL BANKS ASSEMBLED a fine library of archival books about the radical abolitionist John Brown when he was writing *Cloudsplitter*, his critically acclaimed novel of 1998. We can assume he mined it eagerly and often for the details that lend this book so much of its authority and texture.

But the greater part of *Cloudsplitter*'s achievement is not historical authenticity. It's what happens on these pages when the facts are few or lusterless and the story calls for stronger measures, like unalloyed invention. Critics carped. (Defenders of abolitionist John Brown's flame are stern!) But Banks was only doing what he had to. When history is mystery, a brazen novelist strides into the breach and invents the story that calls history to vivid life. John Brown was a tough nut, a living contradiction. A psalm-quoting, Bible-teaching farmer on his North Elba farm. The instigator of a midnight massacre of unarmed settlers in Osawatimie, Kansas. A man of iron conviction whose death advanced the cause of freedom. Neither history nor biography has reconciled these disjuncts. But Banks's stubborn interest, not the influencer or the legend but the man, gets us close. The liberties Banks took in *Cloudsplitter*, the thoughts and motives he ascribed to John Brown's family and his Adirondack neighbors, vest the legend with a long-needed complexity and lash it to our own.



The God of the Woods

LIZ MOORE. 2024

LIZ MOORE'S BESTSELLING LITERARY THRILLER, *The God of the Woods*, is the only thriller in this list. An adolescent girl, and then another one, go missing in the deep woods around Camp Emerson in 1975. Fourteen years before, another camper, a young boy, vanished from this same Adirondack summer camp. The reprise of this trauma rattles summer people and their year-round neighbors alike, even as unresolved suspicions about the first unsolved disappearance are revived. Moore roots much of this mutual mistrust to an implacable divide between wealthy seasonal residents and the poorer year-round locals who are their guides, gardeners, counselors and cooks.

Class conflict in the Adirondacks is a beguiling subject, cropping up in every novel included in these pages. And no stage more intimate for these injuries than this keenly rendered Adirondack summer camp. But Moore's summer aristocrats are too much of a type—over-drinking, condescending to the staff, neglecting their children just as rotely as their working-class Adirondack hirelings are forthright, woods-savvy, and true of heart. Happily, the sheer momentum of the story whips us past the clichés.

The Power Line

CHRISTOPHER SHAW. 2020

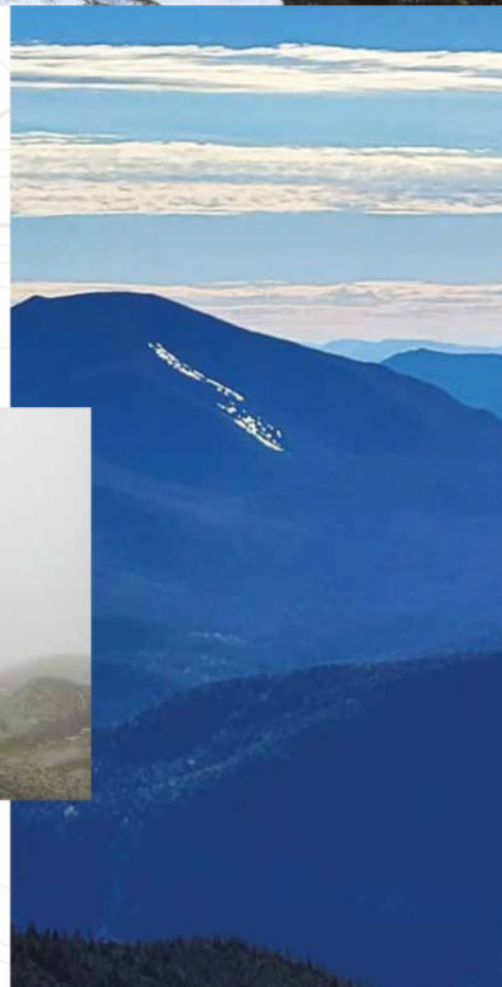
AN ELUSIVE ADIRONDACK legend is the subject of this rollicking, sly novel. In the first third of the 20th-century, Fran (François) Germain is a man of the woods, a rumrunner, crack shot and jack of every Adirondack trade and skill. But by the late 1980s, local folks who remember him are dying, and the amateur historian on Germain's trail needs to nail down | *Continued on page 112*



Found This Place Today



text & photographs
by Brian Mann

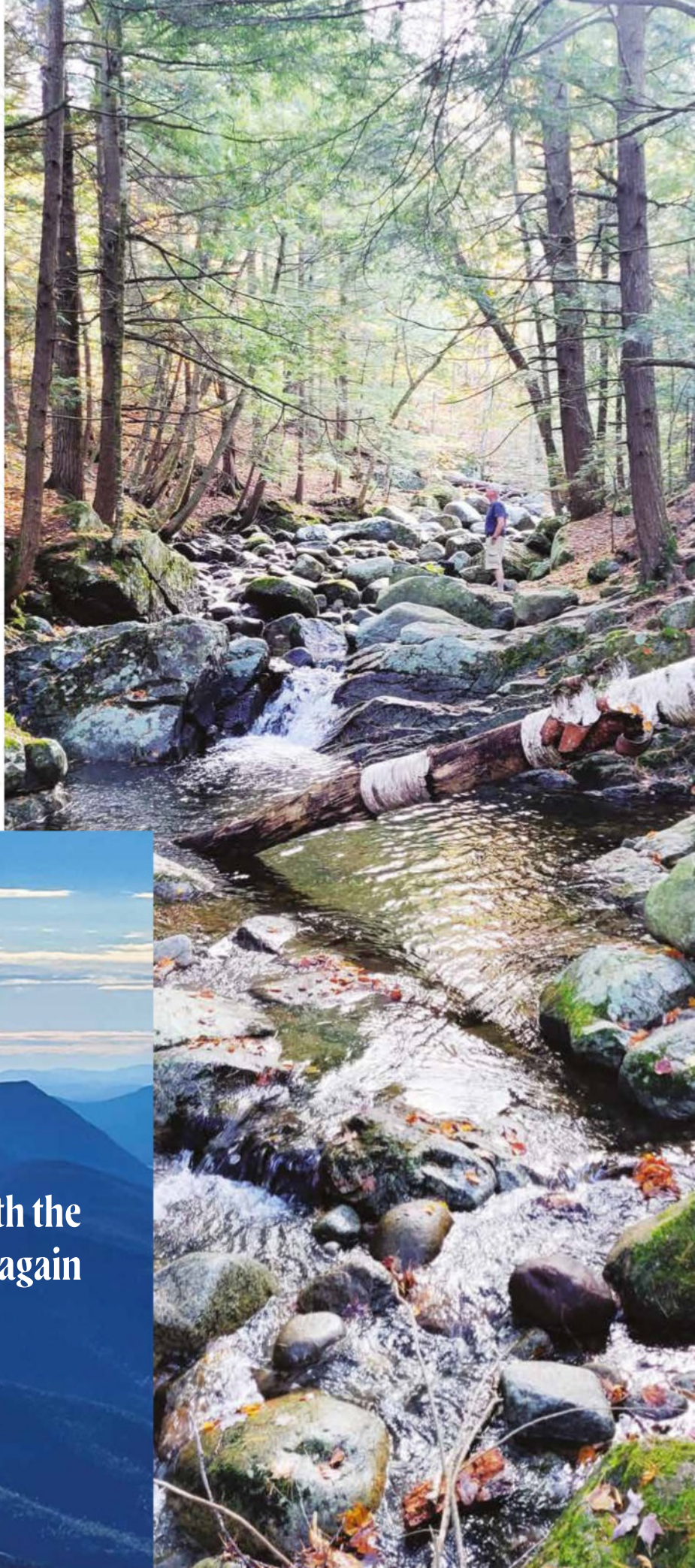




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THE FIRST TIME I used the phrase “Found This Place Today” to caption a photograph on Instagram, I’d spent a marathon day hiking in the High Peaks Wilderness. I hadn’t really discovered anyplace new, but I instantly liked the way the words reframed my experience.

For one thing, I do feel a secret sense of exploration trekking in the Adirondacks. I often imagine I’m on a journey that might lead somewhere entirely different, even when following trails I’ve hiked over and over. And really, you never do walk the same path or take the same photograph twice. Nor are we exactly the same person at the end of two different treks. Tiny shifts in season, weather



Reconnecting with the Adirondacks again and again



and our own moods and spirits create a remarkable alchemy.

Found This Place Today also suggests a kind of accidental quality, a lightness and a serendipity. Yes, I scrambled over rock and root to reach exactly that location at the precise moment when I snapped the picture. But I might as well have been standing on the next peak over at sunrise or swimming in that pond down in the valley in the moonlight or napping under a white pine in the noon heat.

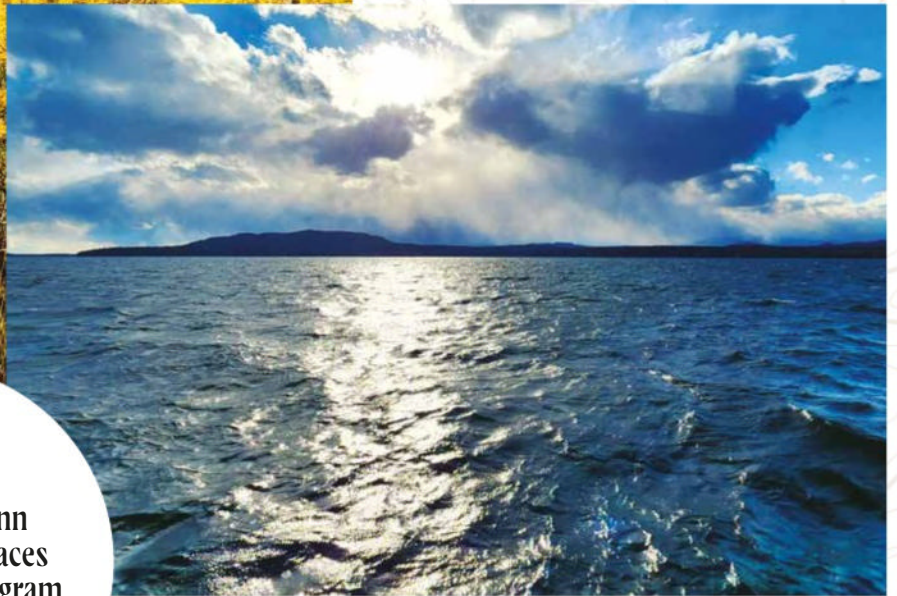
So as the years went by, I kept using the phrase and people responded to it. I received notes from around the Adirondack Park and around the world. Sometimes a question: Where exactly did you find that place? How can I get there? Weren't you cold or lonely? Mostly the messages are a simple acknowledgment of the beauty that endures in the world: Thanks for taking me there. I love the light on the water. It looks peaceful.

I understand why people yearn for these images. I've kept this visual journal of the Adirondacks, and shared it publicly on social media, during years when my work as a journalist took me more and more often beyond the Adirondack Park's boundaries. I've experienced firsthand the growing contrast between the beauty and peace of this place and the turmoil and trouble of the wider world.

These days, I often hear the phrase Found This Place Today in my head when I'm returning. I catch a first glimpse of the mountains or Lake Champlain or my garden and pause to snap a picture. In those moments I feel the generosity of this landscape and its small towns. I've lived in the park for a quarter century, yet now more than ever it's a place I'm journeying toward, the home place I'm still trying to find. ▲

Brian Mann is a correspondent for National Public Radio who covers the fentanyl-overdose crisis, the war in Ukraine and the Trump administration. His audio postcards from the Adirondacks and other wild places are a regular feature on NPR. Mann previously worked for 20 years for North Country Public Radio and is a frequent contributor to *Adirondack Life*. He lives in Westport in the Champlain Valley.





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to see the latest places
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Wilderness Warriors

The story behind the trailblazers who shaped the Adirondack Park

BY BRAD EDMONDSON

On a beautiful July day in 1989, Harold Jerry stepped up to the podium at the Westport Country Club. Kim Elliman, board chair of the Adirondack Council, handed him a life-sized loon decoy, expertly hand-carved and painted, as the audience stood to applaud. Jerry was the Council's Conservationist of the Year. He was about to turn 70, and the time had come for him to sum things up.

Harold Jerry had been the Council's cofounder and guiding spirit. He saved the group from bankruptcy in 1977 after a disastrous start. He inspired board members and staff as it grew in the 1980s to become one of the largest environmental advocacy groups in the Northeast. In 1989, he was serving on a commission appointed by the governor to recommend ways to secure the special qualities of the Adirondack Park for the next century. Jerry had directed a similar commission that led to the creation of the Adirondack Park

Harold Jerry, executive secretary of the Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks, with staff ecologist George Davis on a research trip in June 1969.

Agency in 1971.

In his speech, Jerry imagined what the park might look like in 30 years. He teased the eager audience with findings from the commission, which kept its meetings closed. He correctly predicted that more residents of the Adirondack Park would work remotely in 2021, although he missed the mark when he foresaw solar-powered snowmobiles. He was also wrong when he said that the state would own four million acres of the six-million-acre park, but he was headed in the right direction: in 2025, New York State owns 2.6 million acres in the Adirondacks in fee, but it also owns easements that protect an additional 800,000 acres from development.

Great things are coming, Jerry told his comrades. All our hard work is going to pay off. "I was not sure that I would be able to deliver the final paragraph without choking up," he wrote in his diary. "I managed to get it out except for the final sentence, which was, 'may it stay forever wild.'"

It was a high point. But just three years later, the Council's board pushed Jerry out. He spent the last few years of his life estranged from the group he did so much to build. As the Council celebrates its 50th anniversary this summer, it's a good time to explain how that happened and consider what it says about the group today.

The term "wilderness warrior" was originally applied to Theodore Roosevelt. It describes three generations of Americans, most of them men and almost all of them white, who built the movement for the protection of open space. There were only a few warriors in the first half of the 20th century. Many more emerged among veterans of World War II and the Korean War, and the third generation was a tidal wave of Baby Boomers. The Adirondack Council is one small part of their legacy.

A majority of Americans believe that areas of natural beauty should be protected from development, according to decades of surveys. The warriors had enormous success as they forced governments to reflect the public's wishes. But the warriors were also overwhelmed

by change. They were thrashed by property rights activists and business lobbyists, and they were slow to welcome women and Black, indigenous and other people of color into leadership positions.

The wilderness warrior's core belief is that all living things have an inherent right to exist, and that human needs should not automatically overrule the rights of other species. Bob Marshall (1901–1939), an early warrior for the Adirondacks, wrote about the High Peaks as if he were their lover. But he was also a forester who learned the emerging science of ecology at the New York State Forestry School's summer camp—today's SUNY's Cranberry Lake Biological Station—in the years after World War I. Marshall helped set the pattern. Whenever spiritual and scientific passions for the natural world are joined, a wilderness warrior is born.

Harold Jerry (1919–2001) never met Marshall, but he might have been his most important disciple. Nearly every Friday since 1962, in rain, sun, ice and snow, Jerry and his wife, Lyn, drove from their home in Albany to spend the weekend in a cabin north of Speculator that had no electricity or running water. He usually took stacks of reports and papers with him to read, and when he needed to, he would send Lyn back into town to call his office on a pay phone and deliver his messages. She would sometimes hold a tape recorder up to the receiver and play her husband's voice through it to his secretary. Harold didn't want to miss out on a single moment he could spend at Dug Mountain.

Born and raised in Plattsburgh, Harold Jerry was a Princeton-educated lieutenant colonel who went to Harvard Law School after a tour of duty in postwar Europe. He held several jobs in state government, including a term as state senator, before his boss, Governor Nelson Rockefeller, hired him to be executive secretary of The Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks. Rockefeller used his power to turn that Commission's first recommendation, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), into law.

One of Jerry's first hires for the Rocke-



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feller commission was a mercurial 26-year-old wilderness ecologist named George Davis (1942–). Davis became the first employee of the APA, leading the team that drafted the agency's private land plan. He also developed a relationship with Jerry similar to that of a father and son. The APA under George Davis had a warrior mindset. But after Hugh Carey replaced Rockefeller and the APA became more like a normal state agency, Jerry and Davis started looking for a way to keep their original vision alive. They took over the two-year-old Adirondack Council and dedicated it to advancing their uncompromising standards.

The early Council was powered largely by alumni of the Rockefeller commission and the original APA, including the legendary forest ranger, conservationist and Adirondack Council cofounder Clarence Petty (1905–2009); conservation department naturalist Greenleaf Chase (1912–1995); Richard Lawrence (1909–2002), chair of the Rockefeller commission, and fellow commissioners Fred O'Neil (1905–1992) and Mary Prime (1901–1981); and APA alums Gary Randorf (1937–2019), the Council's first employee and longtime executive director, and Dick Beamish (1934–), a whiz at public relations and marketing.

George Davis had a habit of pushing so hard for change that he got fired from whatever job he held. That's what happened at the Adirondack Park Agency in 1976. And in 1982, after the U.S. Forest Service also invited Davis to get lost, Harold Jerry arranged another job for him. Davis became the Council's second staffer and immediately got to work on two things. He wanted to set up a land trust that would allow landowners to limit development not only on wild land, but also on working forests and farms. Davis also wanted to research and write a plan for land acquisition to "complete" the park as a haven for biodiversity and "wilderness values."

Forty years ago, those were both wild ideas. It wasn't long before people were calling Davis the Council's "house visionary." Slowly, the visions were realized. The Council founded the Adirondack Land Trust in 1985, and the first



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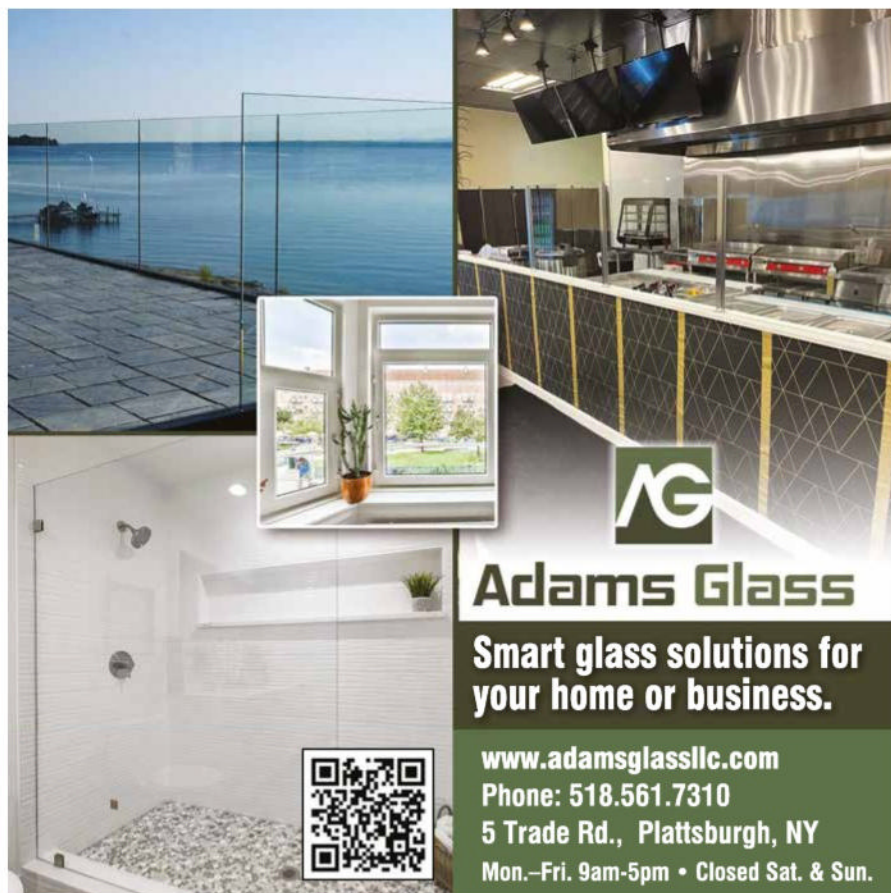
As we celebrate 50 years of advocacy and conservation leadership in 2025, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our members and supporters. Your dedication, passion, and commitment to preserving the Adirondacks have made a lasting impact on this national treasure. We are excited to continue serving you and the Park for generations to come. Thank you!

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volume of its big plan, “Vision 2020,” was published in 1988.

The Council’s overarching idea in those days was that the Adirondack Park Agency had not gone far enough. The park’s backcountry, road corridors and lakeshores were not adequately protected. But many town and county government officials were dead set against any state agency telling them what to do. “I heard it so many times,” said Richard Booth, an original APA employee who later served as an agency board member. “They would say, ‘Don’t tell me I live in a park. This is where I work and go to church. This is where my parents are buried. I live in a town.’”

The Council ignored the locals. As far as they were concerned, the Adirondack Park was a wilderness preserve that hadn’t been finished yet, and if you disagreed, you were the enemy.

About 42 percent of the Adirondack Park is owned by New York State. The rest of it is privately owned, and almost all of that land—outside of villages and hamlets—is large estates and working forests. In 1989, just 564 entities owned 60 percent of the park’s private land. Davis, Jerry and other Council members wanted to keep roads and buildings away from as much of that land as possible, especially if it was near a marsh or a lake. The backcountry wouldn’t exactly be wilderness, but it should definitely be wild.

The Adirondack Council had just 1,400 members in 1980. It had 12,500 in 1989 and several hundred new members were joining each month, as millions of men and women in the massive Baby Boom generation, born between 1946 and 1964, discovered outdoor recreation and became wilderness warriors. The Council was built by Boomers like Frances Beinecke (1949–), who was its board chair at the beginning of her long career with the Natural Resources Defense Council; Kim Elliman (1953–), a private banker and the great-great grandson of William Rockefeller Jr., who took over from Beinecke and went on to be the longtime CEO of the Open Space Institute; and Barbara Glaser (1951–), a philanthropist who succeeded Elliman



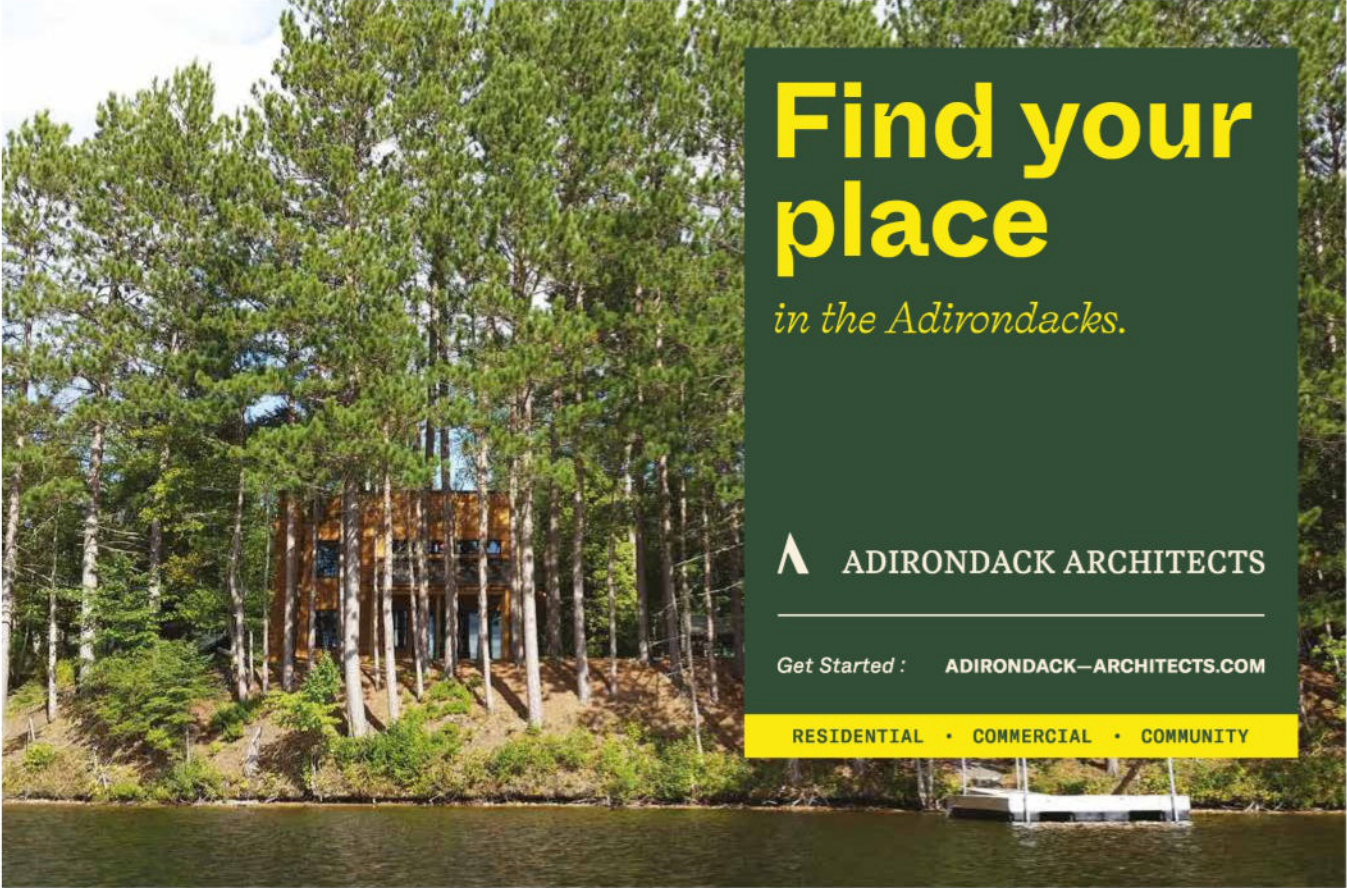
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FOR THE RECORD

and led the Council for two eventful years. Glaser also was responsible for saving Great Camp Sagamore, assisting organizations in the hospice and historic preservation movements, and preserving open space near her home in Saratoga Springs.

In 1989, the park was facing a wave of development pressure and the Adirondack Council had become too powerful for politicians to ignore. So Governor Mario Cuomo, who was up for re-election, did what politicians often do when they want to sidestep an issue. He appointed The Commission on the Adirondack Park in the 21st Century and gave it a year to come up with recommendations. Harold Jerry and other wilderness advocates held a majority of the seats. George Davis was its executive director.

Jerry had four goals for the commission. He wanted no development in the backcountry, stronger protection for lakefronts, a clearer path for state-owned conservation easements and more power for the APA. But the Commission began with several serious problems. It did not have enough time or money. Several of its members were primarily concerned about improving the health and welfare of park residents, not wilderness. And one commissioner was a different kind of warrior.

Robert Flacke (1933–2018) managed the Fort William Henry resort in Lake George, but he had a long political resume, too. He had forced George Davis to leave the APA when he was chair of the APA's board. He then put in a three-year term as commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, making a lot of friends in high places in Albany. But Flacke's heart was with his family and business in Lake George, where he had been town supervisor. He hated the Ivy League, old-money style of the Council, which he called "the environmental oligarchy." A sign over his office door read, "Private Lands In Private Hands."

Flacke had a powerful ally in Senator Ron Stafford, who represented most of the Adirondack Park. Stafford was deputy chair of the state senate's



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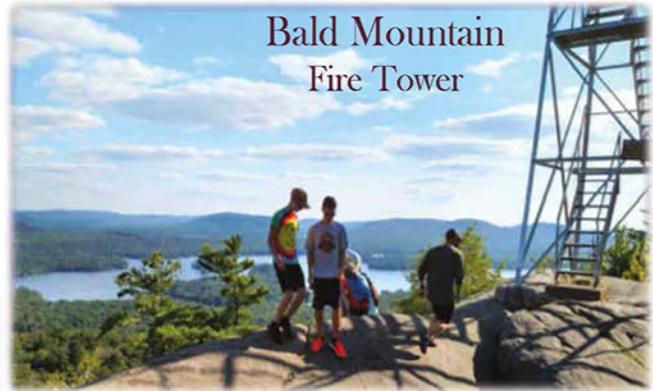
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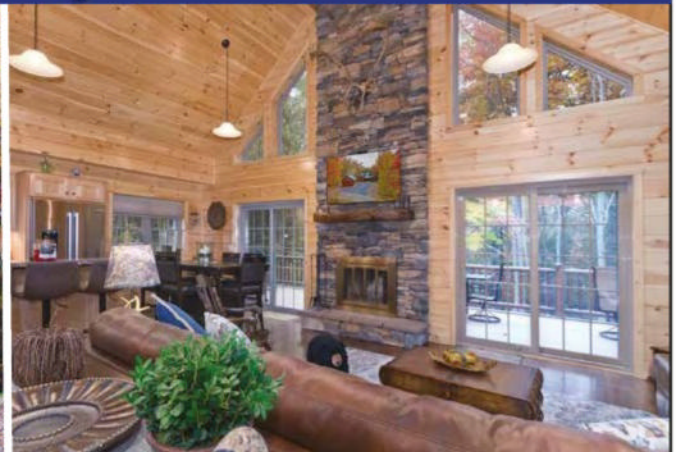
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finance committee, which gave him a lot of power over the budget, and most of the voters in his district hated the APA. There was no way Stafford would allow any of the Commission's recommendations onto the senate floor for a vote. And Cuomo, struggling to pass a budget in an era of serious deficits, did not want to make Stafford angry.

Stafford was hostile to the wilderness warriors in public, but he kept the lines of communication open in private. He had been a college intern in the Plattsburgh law office owned by Jerry's father, and both men were proud of their North Country roots. He and Harold Jerry were lifelong friends.

The Commission's report, released in May 1990, contained several proposals that inflamed the North Country, such as a one-year moratorium on all rural development in the park. Flacke organized and funded the opposition. A loud protest movement with a violent side directed its anger at the Council and the warriors. For several years the North

Country was rattled by reports of arson, death threats, vandalism, fistfights and gunfire. George Davis never worked in the Adirondacks again. Several Council board members began saying that the group needed to soften its tone.

Harold Jerry was having none of it. He was furious that the Council didn't give the Commission its wholehearted support. He characterized the opposition as a pack of self-interested real-estate developers feeding lies to uninformed small-town people. He wanted a forceful response from the Council, but he didn't get it.

"It's all right to be conciliatory, but that's not my role," Jerry told Dick Beamish in 1996. "We have to have somebody out there staking out a hard line, the extreme position." To Jerry, that meant no compromise in defense of wilderness.

It all came to a head in July 1992, when Jerry used his personal influence with Stafford to kill a deal the Council supported. The deal would have added

several "scenic jewels" to the Forest Preserve, but Jerry couldn't support it because it also stripped authority from the APA. Stafford killed the bill, the Council's board and staff were furious, and Jerry resigned, never to return.

Claire Barnett was a consultant assisting small businesses in the North Country when she was asked to join the 21st Century Commission. She had also spent 10 years at the Essex County Department of Mental Health, so she knew about rural poverty first-hand. But she couldn't get the Commission to spend much time investigating family or community issues. "They were thought of as women's issues," she said. "And land use was a guy issue."

Barnett went out on her own to talk to three North Country women she knew and respected. "I called them up and asked them a few general questions," she said. "What do you want your grandchildren to be able to enjoy? What things in your community need to be preserved?" Barnett was experimenting

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with a different approach. She wanted to learn the hopes and fears of Adirondack Park residents, look for common ground and build from that. But that wasn't the approach the wilderness warriors wanted.

Thirty-five years after the Adirondacks blew up, American politics is approaching Civil War-levels of polarization. Strangely, though, land protection has strong bipartisan support throughout the U.S., and the drive to protect natural landscapes has gone global. Hundreds of nonprofits work closely with financiers, governments and scientists to draft complex management plans that aim to preserve rural landscapes and the communities they contain.

There are two reasons. Most people believe that areas of natural beauty should be protected from development. More important, though, is that the listen-first approach Claire Barnett used has since become standard practice. Collaboration and dialogue are the

watchwords for international groups such as the Network for Landscape Conservation. The Adirondack Common Ground Alliance, founded in 2007, and other groups keep this approach alive in the North Country.

Land protection deals are now far more complex than they were in 1990, as diverse stakeholders try to preserve traditional businesses like forestry and ranching while developing new ones, and without degrading the natural integrity of their surroundings. It isn't easy to find ways for human settlements and diverse ecosystems to thrive as next-door neighbors. But it is the path to lasting solutions.

The era of the white, male wilderness warrior has passed away. But before we say goodbye, we need to give them their due. In many ways, "the activists of that generation were revolutionaries," said Raul J. Aguirre, the Adirondack Council's current executive director. "They were expanding on concepts that had not been fully proven yet. Forty years

ago, most people thought that the only way to protect land was to create a new national park."

The tools pioneered by the wilderness warriors—like conservation easements, new forms of funding and tax incentives—are now used by land trusts and other groups to protect millions of acres of privately-owned land. "They came up with a new framework that saved critical habitat at a landscape scale," Aguirre said. "I probably could not have had a 30-year career in conservation if they hadn't done what they did." ▲

Brad Edmondson is the author of *A Wild Idea: How the Environmental Movement Tamed the Adirondacks* (2021). This article is based on research for his forthcoming book, *Adirondack Green* (2026).

On July 19, the Adirondack Council hosts its *Forever Wild Celebration: Honoring 50 Years of Adirondack Conservation and Advocacy* at the Silver Bay YMCA Conference Center. Learn more at adirondackcouncil.org.



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Etiquette and Essentials

On the finer points of hiking

James Appleton, author of *The Adirondack 46 in 18 Hikes*, never expected to be a 46er, let alone write a High Peaks guidebook. His first stab at climbing an over-4,000-footer, Big Slide via the Brothers trail with a group of more physically fit friends, ended with him turning around before reaching the first Brother, out of breath and demoralized.

Fourteen years later, the tagalong has become the teacher, offering a strategic road map for tackling the 46, as well as tips and tricks for newcomers and enough tales of his adventures to keep veteran trekkers entertained. The book is stuffed with outing advice, from footwear and camping regulations to the following rundown of trail etiquette and the essentials that hikers should always have stashed in their packs.

James Appleton, an outdoor guide and host of *The 46 of 46* Podcast, on Mount Colvin.



Hiking Etiquette and the Unwritten Rules of the Trail

Like anything, hiking is an activity with plenty of unwritten rules meant to be followed for the good of the land, the trails, the experience, the wildlife, and other hikers. Most of us learn these “rules” on our own through experience. I hope to shorten that learning curve for many new hikers and campers. I say it often, but unless people have a good experience in the outdoors, they won’t become advocates for the outdoors. I want to create as many advocates for the outdoors and Adirondacks as possible.

Below I have listed some of those unwritten rules to learn before you hit the trail so you’re not “that guy” in the woods. It’s better to be overprepared than underprepared, right?

The Quick Version

- Learn, memorize, and follow the 7 Leave No Trace Principles (this will solve a lot of hiking mishaps and etiquette woes in general; learn more at lnt.org).
- Be prepared, Part 1: Study your map. Create a loose itinerary and know your route before you head out. Your life (and others’) could literally be at stake.
- Be prepared, Part 2: Have the appropriate gear for the terrain and conditions you’ll be hiking in. Once again, your life (and others’) could literally be at stake.
- Check the mountain forecast for the day(s) you plan to hike. There are many websites, but for the sake of ease, mountain-forecast.com is a good resource. Remember, the weather can drastically change without warning in the backcountry—be prepared for everything.
- Do not build fires where fires are not permitted. Fires are prohibited in the Eastern and Central High Peaks Wilderness, and everywhere in the Adirondack Park above 4,000’. Don’t be the guy that burns down the Adirondacks, because I’ll lead the army to find you.
- Camping: Learn the regulations before you go. In the Adirondacks as it pertains to the High Peaks, camping is prohibited on summits, above 3,500’ unless at a designated site, and where “No Camp-

ing” signs are seen. Unless at designated campsites, off-trail camping is permitted but must be 150' from any trail, roadway, or water source.

- Snowshoes are required when the snowdrift in the mountains is more than 8'. This is the case from basically December to May.
- No cotton clothing. Wet cotton does not dry easily. Pick up “moisture-wicking” clothes to stay dry. “Cotton kills,” as the old saying goes.
- Leave the Bluetooth speaker in your car. Nobody wants to hear your music out there. If you want to listen to music, use one earbud so you can still hear

Don't tell hikers coming up the trail “you're almost there!” if they are, in fact, not almost there. You may have good intentions, but it's not always the right thing to say.

your surroundings (e.g., other hikers, animals, Bigfoot, thunder).

- Hikers climbing up the trail have the right of way. Step to the side of the trail, smile, say hello, and wish them a good hike. And for the love of God, don't just blankly stare at the ground and pretend you're not humans passing each other in the woods. That's awkward and weird. Say hello.
- Don't tell hikers coming up the trail “you're almost there!” if they are, in fact, not almost there. You may have good intentions, but it's not always the right thing to say. Sometimes people really do need to turn around on a hike they're not ready for. Yes, this is partially a playful joke, but it's also truthful. It's better for someone to turn around early on their own accord than to keep pushing, eventually needing a ranger rescue farther up the trail because they were told they were “almost there!” It's great to be positive and encouraging to other hikers; just be honest as well.
- If you carry it in, carry it out. Every-

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- You're not the only person on the trail, so be mindful of others. Remember the Golden Rule.

- Stay on the trail and go through the mud, not around the mud. Yes. Walk directly through the mud. Your boots will be fine. This is aimed to stop the widening of trails.

- The slowest hiker should lead the group so you all travel at his/her pace. If you do split up to hike at different paces, you should reconnect every 15 minutes; however, I recommend staying together and hiking at the same pace. Slower is still OKer. That's a word, right?

- When camping, store all food and scented items in your bear canister and place the canister on the ground at least 100' away from your tent/lean-to. Don't forget to put your toothpaste in there too!

- If going number 1 or number 2, do so at least 150' off trail and away from any water sources.

- Dogs: New York regulations always require leashes [in the Eastern High Peaks Wilderness and above 4,000']. Your dog may love everyone, but that doesn't mean other people, or other dogs, love your dog. Dogs are also prohibited on Adirondack Mountain Preserve property.

- Take nothing but pictures and leave nothing but footprints.

Let's Talk Gear: What to Have in Your Backpack

The "10 Essentials" are a good starting point for what to have in your pack. Over time you will develop your own workflow for what gear you like to have and what you don't need, but the 10 essentials are called "essentials" for a reason. I recommend always having these items.

1. Navigation: Map, compass, GPS device, personal locator beacon (PLB) or satellite messenger.

2. Headlamp: Don't forget extra batteries. An extra headlamp is even better since they're small, relatively inexpensive, and clutch when you need it.



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3. Sun protection: Sunglasses, sunscreen, sun-protective clothing, hat, etc.

4. First-aid: Including foot care, insect repellent, Band-Aids, ACE bandage.

5. Knife: For obvious reasons.

6. Fire: Matches, waterproof matches, lighter, flint rod and tinder. Bic lighters are cheap and seem to be indestructible. Multiple fire starters are ideal.

7. Shelter: A light, emergency bivy sack and space blanket with paracord makes a good emergency shelter and takes up minimal space in your pack.

8. Extra food: More is better. Hiking burns a lot of calories, and you're out there to perform and keep your body fueled. Bring extra food because it's better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it. Climbing mountains, specifically High Peaks, isn't the time or place to try "losing weight." Save that for the gym, not when you're eight miles deep in the woods.

9. Extra water: Bring a water filtration device and double the water you think you'll need. Once again, it's better to have it and not need it than need it and not have it. Fortunately, the ADK has a lot of fast-flowing river streams, but when you need the water and there isn't a stream around, you'll be glad you have extra.

10. Extra clothes: Changing into a dry shirt and socks mid-hike is a game changer. It's also safer if you get wet and need new clothes. Being wet in the outdoors can quickly lead to hypothermia (even in the summer). I think you already know hypothermia is something we aim to avoid, right? Personally, I keep a heavy fleece, gloves and a winter hat in my pack all year. If you get caught out there overnight, temperatures can drop dramatically, and they're great items to have in an emergency scenario. ▲

Excerpted from *The Adirondack 46 in 18 Hikes: The Complete Guide to Hiking the High Peaks* by James Appleton (North Country Books, 2025). Listen to Appleton's podcast, *The 46 of 46*, at 46outdoors.com.

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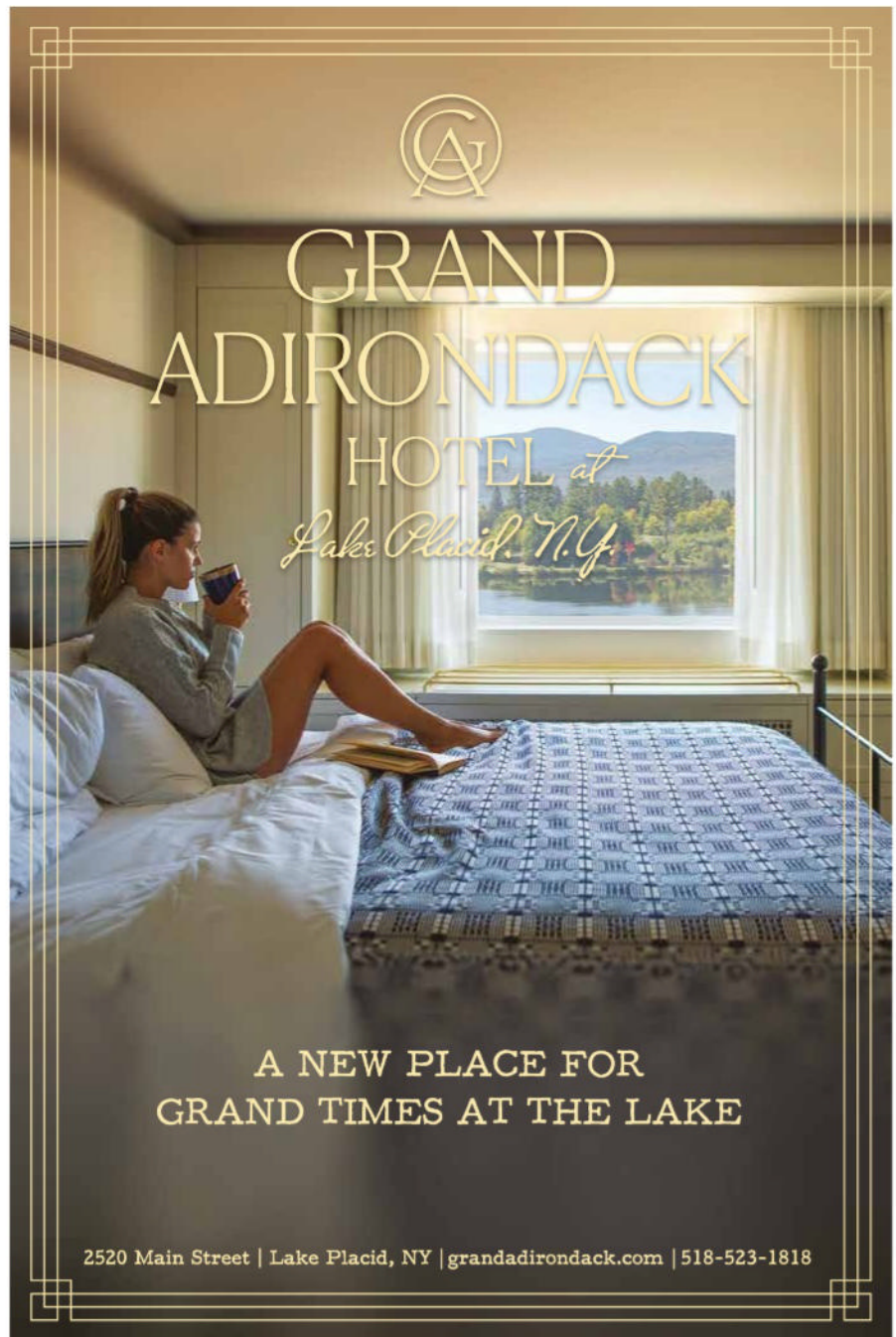
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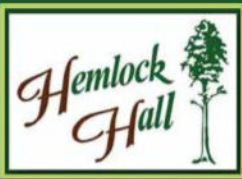
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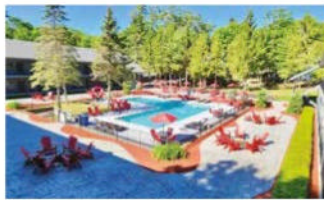
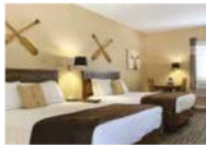
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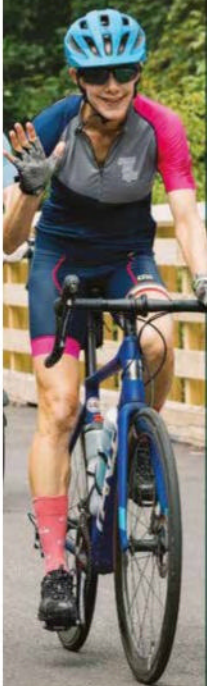
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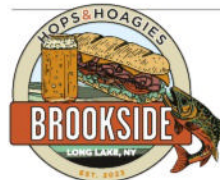
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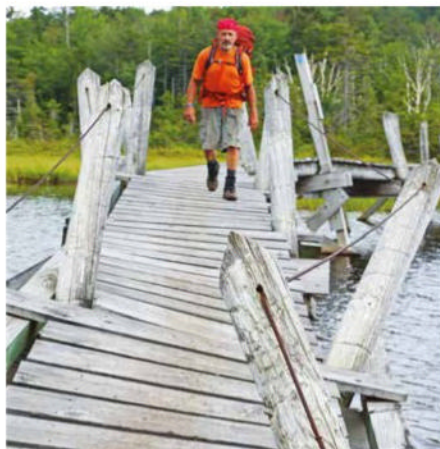
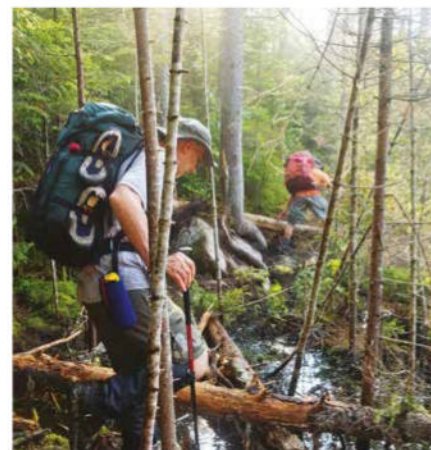
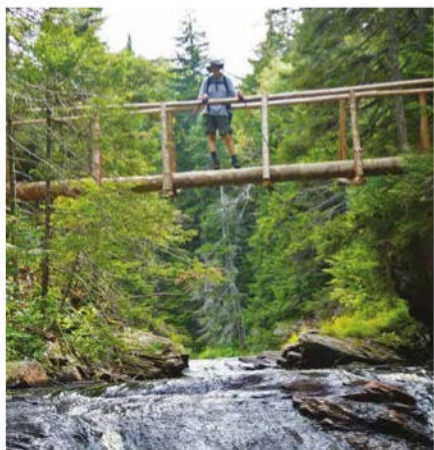
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The Agony of the Feet

Ten days on the Northville-Placid Trail

BY ALAN WECHSLER

Scenes along the author's 138-mile NPT hike—the first long trail in the U.S., built a century ago.

It's easy to hate on the Northville-Placid Trail. One website describes it as "a symbol of preserving wilderness and of the magic of spending time in the woods." I prefer to call it "a lot of beautiful campsites connected by a long, boring walk."

I suppose there are those who say a hike through the forest is its own reward. Those forest-bathing types are not easily thwarted by blisters, mud, mosquitoes, humidity, uneven tenting ground, limited scenic views and other challenges. Well, good for them. But let's be honest: the NPT is no Appalachian Trail.

Still, this 138-mile route is the Adirondacks' only long trail. And in 2024, it celebrated its 100th anniversary. There

were parties, articles, museum lectures, and a guided through-hike for paying guests. There was also a tornado, record rains and enough humidity to make French Guiana consider opening up a field office, but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Anniversaries and long trails inspire people to do strange things. For instance, Russ Byer, a 53-year-old middle school teacher from Rochester, celebrated by hiking the NPT using century-old gear: a wooden-frame pack with a canvas Boy Scout pack. Antique L.L. Bean duck boots. An oiled canvas tarp and wool blanket. A frying pan for making biscuits on a wood fire. He made it as far as Long Lake before his pack fell apart. "I just wanted to honor the trail," he said.

Jeff Case, 67, of Syracuse, is the Adirondack Mountain Club's NPT guidebook editor. He didn't through-hike it last year, but he's done it 30 times in about as many years. The first time he walked it he carried 60 pounds on

his back and lost 15 pounds in his gut. These days, he carries less weight but still takes a full two weeks on the trail. For him, the NPT is about experiencing the real Adirondacks, not the High Peaks or Lake George. "It's about hills and dales and valleys and swamps," he said.

The NPT anniversary buzz made me realize: I've backpacked the White Mountains, trekked in the Himalaya, climbed Mount Kenya, but never hiked the NPT in my backyard. So I set a date for July, and invited two friends, both avid outdoorsmen: Steve Goldstein, a retired surgeon, and Dave "Hoop" Hooper, who works at an energy company and has hiked the trail twice before.

Then I snagged a magazine assignment, because who can resist getting paid to hike? "Wouldn't it be better in September?" Steve asked, but I ignored him. Suffering makes much better copy.

Why Northville and Lake Placid? In 1924, when the trail first opened, roads were awful and few had cars. But there were trains to both villages. The trail was created at a time when hiking and camping were increasingly popular, and a growing middle class had more free time. The NPT was the first long trail in the U.S., built largely by connecting muddy logging roads.

We set off on a hot, sticky, buggy afternoon. In no time, we passed our first southbound thru-hiker, Leo from Louisville, Kentucky. We smelled him 20 paces before he appeared. How to describe the odor? Well, like a guy who had been backpacking for 12 days in July. We'll be this rank in no time, I thought.

"I saw a moose," he told us, when asked what the best part was. "In the 30 seconds it took to take my camera out, it was gone."

The next morning saw our first obstacle: the West Stony Creek. It's about 100 feet across, and there is no bridge. Luckily, it was shallow. It took five minutes of balancing in sports sandals over slippery rocks to reach the other side.

Camp was at a lean-to at Mud Lake. To get there, we crossed the outflow from a beaver dam on some perilous-looking boards. The water looked dark and deep;

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June 19

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July 17

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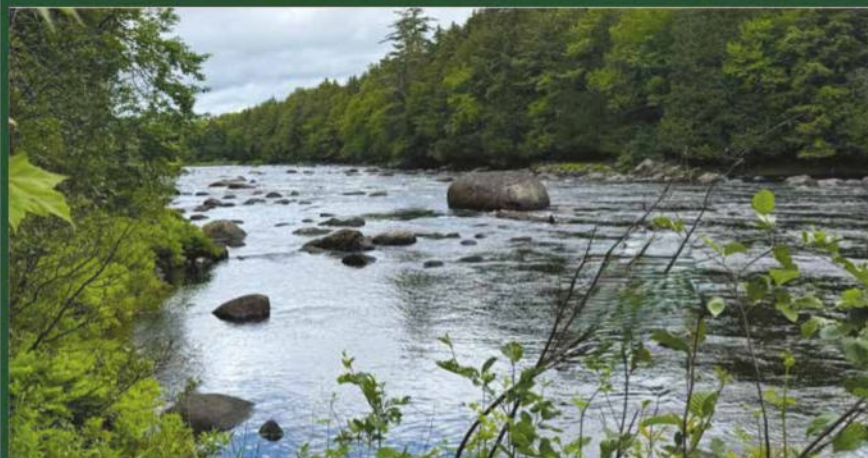
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the lake was not misnamed.

Later, when it was time to filter water for dinner, we went back to that swamp. Steve peered into the inky depths. “I kayaked the Black River,” he said, “and it wasn’t nearly as black as this.” Still, it seemed the only water, so we filled the bottle. Our brand-new filter never worked well again.

We were apprehensive about day three, because we’d be traversing the tornado zone. It had barreled through on July 16, about a week before our start. The 100-mile-per-hour wind left a path of torn-up trees in its wake.

Fortunately, forest rangers had flagged bypasses around the detritus. We traversed it fast enough to buy a hot lunch at the nearby Oxbow Inn (which was already selling “I survived the Oxbow Lake tornado” T-shirts). Then we headed to the home of Piseco NPT Bob, one of the true heroes of the Northville-Placid Trail.

Bob Jenny lives right off a road-walk-in section of the NPT. He mainly sells

firewood in the summertime, but also does a side-hustle ferrying cars for hikers and letting them store food parcels. We hung a right into a driveway decorated by a field of black-eyed Susans and a giant ax sculpture. Bob had our boxes safe in his garage.

“We have hikers coming through all the time,” he said. “I’ll say, ‘You want some water? You need to make a phone call?’ I really have a good time doing it.”

Not everyone does, apparently. He told of a neighbor who complained of the “smelly, unemployed hikers” traipsing down their street.

The NPT goes through the former stomping grounds of several famous hermits, including Noah John Rondeau and French Louie. Piseco was home to lesser-known Foxey Brown, a New England miscreant who fled Boston after a possibly fatal brawl. At first a crank who shot at trespassers, he mellowed out and became a popular hunting and fishing guide. Today, a cross-country-ski

trail is named in his honor.

“People are always intrigued by those who live outside the law, like Bonnie and Clyde,” Steve said. “But you wouldn’t want to meet them.”

Hoop disagreed. Rondeau was so well-regarded that he represented the Adirondacks at a sportsman’s show in New York City. And French Louie used to take the train to Utica to sell his skins, and the children would follow him around. “When he got tired of people, he’d go back to the woods,” Hoop said.

Actually, the hermit tradition continues today. According to Case, the guidebook author, two men used to spend weeks living in the Moose Pond lean-to in winter, back in the late 1970s and early ’80s. They would nail up a plastic sheet to seal the open side, then install a woodstove to stay warm.

Case had his own run-in with a mysterious vagrant in 2000. The man lurked near the Duck Hole lean-to until everyone went to sleep, then stole the food bags hanging from a nearby bridge and



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disappeared. Case had to hike 13.2 hungry miles, until some southbound hikers gave him extra food.

By the end of Day 4, we reached one of the highlights of the NPT: West Canada Lake. The lean-tos were busy on this weekday night, a consequence of the growing popularity of the 22-mile French Louie Loop, which connects nine lean-tos and a half-dozen lakes.

Our proposed lean-to was already occupied by two high-school buddies from Schenectady: Mike Cerne, an Alaskan Coast Guard veteran now in Reno, and Kirk Broecker, a hospital lab technician still in his hometown. “I can’t believe I’ve never been here before,” Mike said, casting an arm toward the lake and the mountains.

There was one thing marring the scenery: “ankle-biter” flies that wouldn’t leave us alone. Kirk tried to smoke them out by burning damp wood, but that just made our eyes water.

Steve and I found a rare piece of level

ground to put our tents up, and I went off to swim. At one point, when I came up for air, a loon floated a few yards away. He eyed me without apparent concern, and then dove for a meal.

The next day was special for Hoop, because we would be passing his lean-to, Cedar Lake #1. Since 1995, he has “adopted” that lean-to, coming in once or twice a year to keep it maintained. It’s a thankless job.

“I’ll bring in a shovel or a broom, and when I’d come back, the handle has been broken off for firewood,” he said. “They pull out the chink from between the logs and use it for firestarter. Anything I leave here gets either burned or stolen.”

Once a visitor found a rusted, 55-gallon drum in the woods. When Hoop next returned, he discovered the drum filled with refuse, as if visitors thought the garbage truck would be coming by. It took Hoop years to carry out all the trash.

Day 5 was also when the mud began.

There is always mud on the NPT. Russ Byer, the historical hiker, says the trail is actually better than it used to be, since some of it has been rerouted from the original logging roads. I say it still needs work.

The rains of spring 2024 were not kind to the NPT. Online posts from hikers in June described boot-grabbing, soul-sucking stretches of muck that lasted from start to finish.

We ran into our first batch along Cedar Lakes, which required careful negotiation. But the real trials began on Day 6. The rains started at breakfast, and didn’t let up until afternoon. Even Steve’s boots—coated with three layers of waterproof Nikwax—were soaked.

I had one secret weapon: neoprene socks. While they weren’t perfect, I avoided that squishy feeling you get from soaking wet wool.

We were hiking a section of the trail built a decade ago to reroute a six-mile patch of road-walking past the Moose



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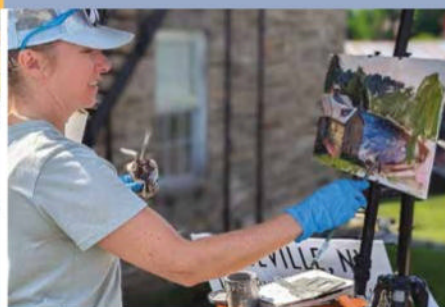
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ADVENTURE

River Plains. The woods were serene, but a couple hours of damp dirt road would have treated our feet better than several miles of Adirondack swamp.

We crossed Route 28 and began a gentle, four-mile ascent to the lean-to at Terrill Pond. This was easily the most hazardous section of the entire trail. The route crossed many wet areas on plank boardwalks, and the wood was slippery as Teflon. I'm still amazed none of us ended up facedown in a bog.

The next morning, the sun was out and Hoop needed first-aid. A bracelet of suppurating sores had formed around his left ankle, and he had blisters on both feet. He covered the wounds with gauze and tape, and we plodded on.

The plan today was for Steve and me to head into the hamlet of Long Lake to pick up a resupply box, while Hoop continued to a lean-to near the water. For much of the next several miles, Steve and I did the Mud Dance, jumping from rock to stump, root to mound, to avoid the muck. Behind us, Hoop trudged on through, his feet a study in saturation.

Ahead of us was the trail's toughest climb, a 3,000-foot-high ridge. We crossed a grassy meadow, balanced across a stream on a single, rotting log, and began to climb. At the top, a "scenic view" promised on the map was nowhere to be seen. But we'd finished the climb and would soon be in town.

We picked up our resupply (thanks, Hoss's!), bought snacks at Stewart's and stopped at the firehouse to beg some gauze for Hoop. When we reached him, his feet were worse. "In my professional opinion," Dr. Steve told him, "you shouldn't go any further. You don't want to get a more permanent injury."

It made me wonder why Hoop had signed on to this hike. After all, he had experienced blisters nearly this severe on previous trips. "There's something inherently wrong with me," he admitted. "I don't remember the pain."

And so it was that Hoop decided to limp out to Long Lake and get a ride back to his car. Steve and I would continue. Except, the next morning, Steve decided to go with him. "I've been backpacking



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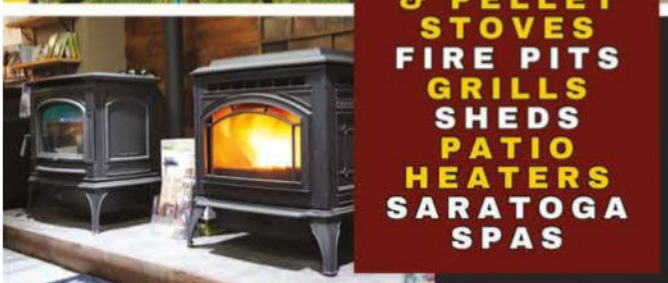
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ADVENTURE

for 45 years, and this is the worst one ever," he said.

That seemed a bit harsh. Yes, I had some bug bites and sore hips, but apart from the weather I thought we had had a good time. Of course, as the one blister-free member of the party, I was in no position to judge.

My next question at this point was: who designed the trail along the edge of Long Lake? It follows the shore for damn near six miles, and you almost never get to see the water. Instead, you get (drum-roll) more trees.

And there was mud. Deep mud, miles of mud, the kind of mud that tries men's souls (and soles). But then I reached the Cold River, and traversed some of the most scenic spots in the Adirondacks.

The 14-mile Cold River is short, delivering water from Duck Hole to the Raquette River. But what it lacks in length it makes up for in majesty: deep pools beneath braided waterfalls and rocks perfect for sunbathing. When I arrived at my lean-to for the night, I dove into those cool, perfect waters.

Camping with me that night were Madison and Jessica Rich, a young couple from Hamburg, New York. They were fun company, but for their rigid wake-up time of 5:30 a.m. By 5:43 a.m., Madison was almost entirely packed, while Jessica was executing yoga poses on her deflated camping mat.

Mostly I walked alone. I passed Noah John Rondeau's hermitage site—today there's just a sign and several rusted buckets and pots—and headed toward the wreckage of Duck Hole. That's where a wooden dam from the 1930s burst in a 2011 hurricane, draining one of the best backcountry lakes in the region.

There were more perilous stream crossings, and spots where I lost the trail. The northern section has a reputation for being difficult to follow, and I can confirm. I ended my hike about 11 a.m. on Day 10. I had hiked the NPT. But would I recommend it? Absolutely. Properly prepared, every serious backpacker should consider doing this historic, challenging, occasionally scenic route.

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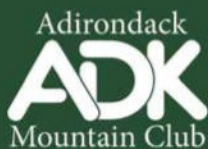
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On the Line

Balancing 30 feet
above Chapel Pond

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPH BY ALVIN REINER

Benjamin Emmett, above, says, “High-lining tends to look scarier than rock climbing,” but it “actually has a better safety record.”

Usually it's rock and ice climbers who are attracted to the sheer cliffs above Keene Valley's Chapel Pond. And, depending on the season, you might see canoeists, kayakers and swimmers in the water.

But on one summer day, people who pulled into the parking area could catch an unfamiliar pastime—“high-lining”—a type of “slacklining,” or balancing on a strip of webbing, at significant heights.

Benjamin Emmett was negotiating a 175-meter line, approximately 30 feet above the water's surface. He'd secured his line from a tree at the parking area's shoreline to a campsite on the opposite side.

The line, constructed of Dyeema, a buoyant lightweight polyethylene fiber material considered 15 times stronger than steel, had been transported by a paddleboard and pulled taut. Dyeema is also used to repair human joints and can stop bullets like Kevlar.

“We put it up by throwing ropes into the trees and ascending up, arborist style,” Emmett explained, “then anchoring to the trees with industrial crane slings that protect the bark from abrasion.”

After his first crossing, Emmett felt that the line was too slack. So, using the low-tech technique of hollering—his voice echoing off the rock walls to his partner “Vova”—the tension was increased for his return trip.

“One thing that attracts me to slack-lining and highlining as a hobby is how new and cutting-edge the gear and techniques are to rig a line of this length easily—especially with only two people,”

said Emmett.

"Highlining tends to look scarier than rock climbing, but actually has a better safety record, as we're rigging a more redundant system, usually with much stronger materials than you would use for climbing."

Emmett wears a harness, which in a few instances kept him from plunging into Chapel Pond below.

He said, "Walking in the middle of space feels different than rock climbing, where you're always up against a big, solid wall. Once you have the basic movements down, it's very much a mental sport about facing your fears and finding a relaxed and meditative headspace in the face of visceral danger."

Emmett has been rigging lines in the Adirondacks since 2018, in places such as Moss Cliff, Roaring Brook Falls and the high gaps along the cliffs by Chapel Pond and Beer Walls.

"We chose Chapel Pond this year because I knew the details of the rig and what materials to bring to get it up quickly," said Emmett. "It would typically take more time and manpower to rig this length of a highline. The process of tagging the gap with a pull line is often arduous and time consuming in the mountains, and here it takes about five minutes for the short, easy paddle."

"We've had very good relationships with the NY DEC rangers," said Emmett. "They've shown up to visit every one of our rigs for the last two years. They are very safety-oriented and we've been happy for their attention and questions about our access and rigging methods."

Highlining is legal as long as there is no damage to trees; Department of Environmental Conservation rangers recommend in-depth research on proper-sized anchors and the study of vector forces on those anchors.

Emmett said that he's "careful to follow all rules and respect the backcountry" in his rigging practices. He adheres to Leave No Trace, when using trees or rock gear, and does not drill or bolt into rock. ▲

Alvin Reiner is a reporter and photographer for the Plattsburgh Press-Republican. He lives in New Russia and serves as its mayor.



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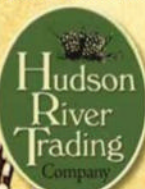
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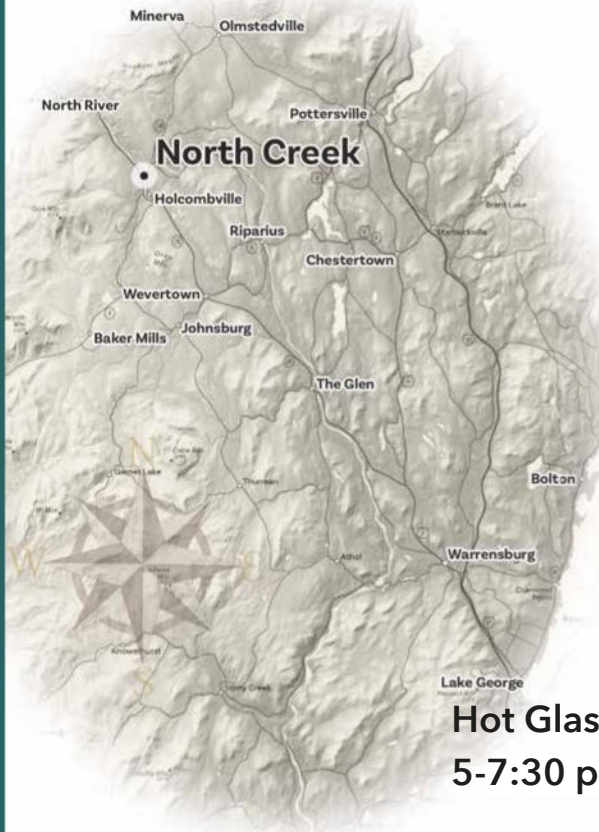


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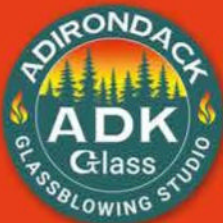
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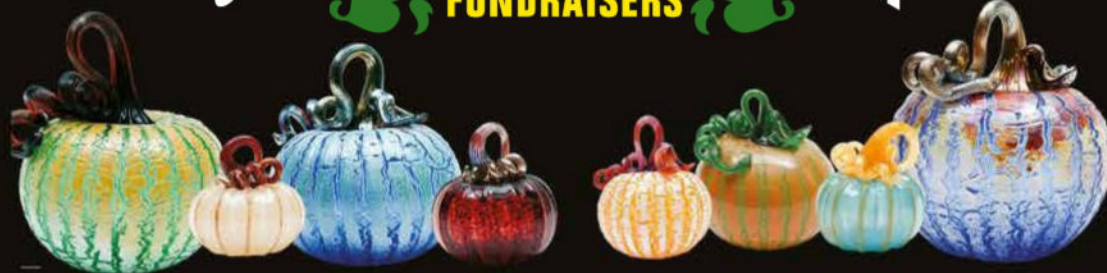
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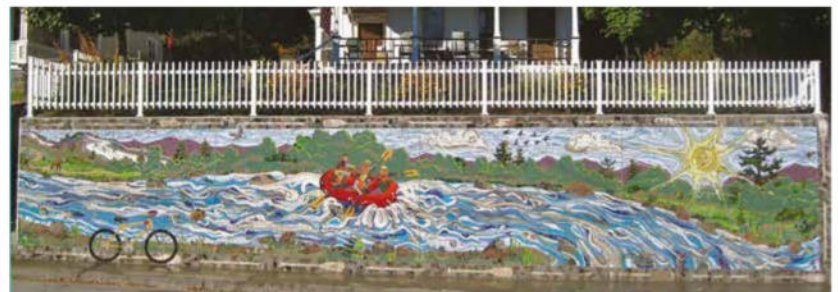
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OUT & ABOUT



On August 23, **Mushroom Mania**—an event that puts the fun in fungi—returns to the Adirondack Experience, in Blue Mountain Lake, starting at 10 a.m. The day will be packed with demonstrations, hikes, crafts and more, all dedicated to the “mycelium superhighway hidden beneath your feet.” For details visit theadkx.org.

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FESTIVALS, OUTINGS & MORE

June 5-8: Adirondack Boreal Birding Festival. Seminars and guided hikes and outings throughout Hamilton County. Check for schedule; register for outdoor events in advance. (518) 548-3076. www.adirondackbirds.com

June 19, July 10 & 17, August 7 & 14: Paddle with Loons on Little Clear Pond. Learn about the lives of loons on 2-hour guided paddles with the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation. Register in advance. (518) 354-8636. adkloon.org

June 21: Wilmington Whiteface Whiskey Run & Festival. Races, whiskey tastings, food and music. Preston Festival Field, Wilmington. Races start at 9:30; festival at 11. www.adkwhiskeyrun.com

June 21: Tupper Lake 8-Miler. Paddle from the town boat launch on Lake Simon Road to the Oxbow and back, with a post-race barbecue. Registration starts at 9:30 a.m., race at 11. (518) 354-8377. 8miler.com

June 28-29: Adirondack Wine & Food Festival. New York wines and brews, plus food trucks and vendors. Charles R. Wood Festival Commons, Lake George. 11 a.m. each day. (518) 668-9463. adkwinefest.com

July 6: Willard Hanmer Guideboat and Canoe Race. Races start at 10:30 at Riverfront Park, in Saranac Lake, followed by a picnic at the Saranac Lake Fish & Game Club. saranaclake.com

July 13: Ride for the River. Twenty- and 40-mile community bike rides to benefit Ausable Freshwater Center. Lake Everest Beach, Wilmington. 8:30 a.m. Post-ride celebration starts at 12:30 p.m. (518) 524-4674. www.bikeadirondacks.com

July 20: Ironman Lake Placid. 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike and 26.2-mile run. Qualifying event for Ironman World Championship. ironman.com

July 26: Indian Lake Poker Paddle. Explore Adirondack Lake and build a five-card poker hand. Anything propelled by a paddle qualifies. Register in advance. Byron

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OUT & ABOUT

Park. 10:30 a.m. (518) 648-5112. adirondackexperience.com

August 1-3: Durant Days. Celebrating William West Durant's Great Camp style of architecture with tours, a boat parade, fireworks and more. Check for schedule. (518) 624-3077. www.mylonglake.com

August 2: Great Brant Lake Canoe Race. Six-mile race down the length of Brant Lake and into Mill Pond, in Horicon. Check-in/registration starts at 7:15 a.m., at the Horicon Community Center; race begins at 9:30 from Hoyt's Beach. www.northwarrencanoe.com

August 10: Blue Mountain Sizzler 5K. Run/walk to benefit Blue Mountain Lake Association. Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts, Blue Mountain Lake. 8:20 a.m. (518) 352-7364. bluemtsizzler.com

August 23: Pat Stratton Ride. Hundred-, 50- and 25-mile options. Register in advance. Mount Pisgah Recreation Center. (518) 891-5873. www.bikeadironclacks.com

September 4-7: Old Forge Marathon Weekend. Ultra-, full- or half-marathon, plus 5K, 10K, ADKrazy (5K, 10K, full and half-marathons over three days), Loon Challenge (10K and half- or full-marathon over two days), Ky-Tri (kayak, run, bike) and 20- or 32-mile Old Forge Gravel Grinders. (315) 369-6983. runsignup.com/oldforge

September 20: Speculator Bear & Wine Festival. Beer, liquor and wine tastings, plus music, food trucks and more. Speculator Pavilion park. 11 a.m. (518) 548-4521. speculatorchamber.com

September 26-28: Great Adirondack Moose Festival. Moose-calling and count-the-scat contests, plus kids' activities, guided hikes, music and more. Townwide, Indian Lake. Check for schedule. (518) 648-5112. adirondackexperience.com ▲

Editors' Note: Websites and phone numbers are included for the confirmation of dates and times. Find more events at www.adirondacklife.com.



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Renaissance Man

We'd lost my father years ago.
An unexpected gift brought him back

BY COLTER MANCINI

I remember the gloss of a fresh coat of varnish on a newly built boat. I remember the coziness of the shop from the woodstove in the dead of winter. But even without it, my dad's energy filled the area. He was calm and focused, with a passion for his craft.

For years after he died, I dreamed of him. It was like a brief moment with him again. He'd always be happy and healthy, like nothing before ever happened.

It's May of 2021. The traffic going in and out of the 37th Street tunnel screeches. The streets below are jammed. Though I'm 11 flights up, I can hear it all, from car stereos to jack hammers to horns.

I had just moved into a one-bedroom apartment after a painful breakup. My job in fitness took a major blow during

the pandemic and my brother and I hadn't spoken in a year. My life had changed enormously in a short span—it had completely fallen apart.

Sneakers on. Sunglasses. Earbuds in. As soon as I grab my phone, my friend Lauren calls.

"Hey, so, is your dad's name Carl Mancini?" she asks.

"Ummm, yeah, how the hell do you know that?"

"Well," she says, "I have a boat sitting in my garage with his name on it."

Back in the '80s my family had moved from Michigan into what we would forever refer to as "the yellow house," on a hill in Keene. I was just two years old. My brother was five. Across the driveway from our house my dad built a woodshop with two huge bay doors and an upstairs for storage. His trade: boat building.

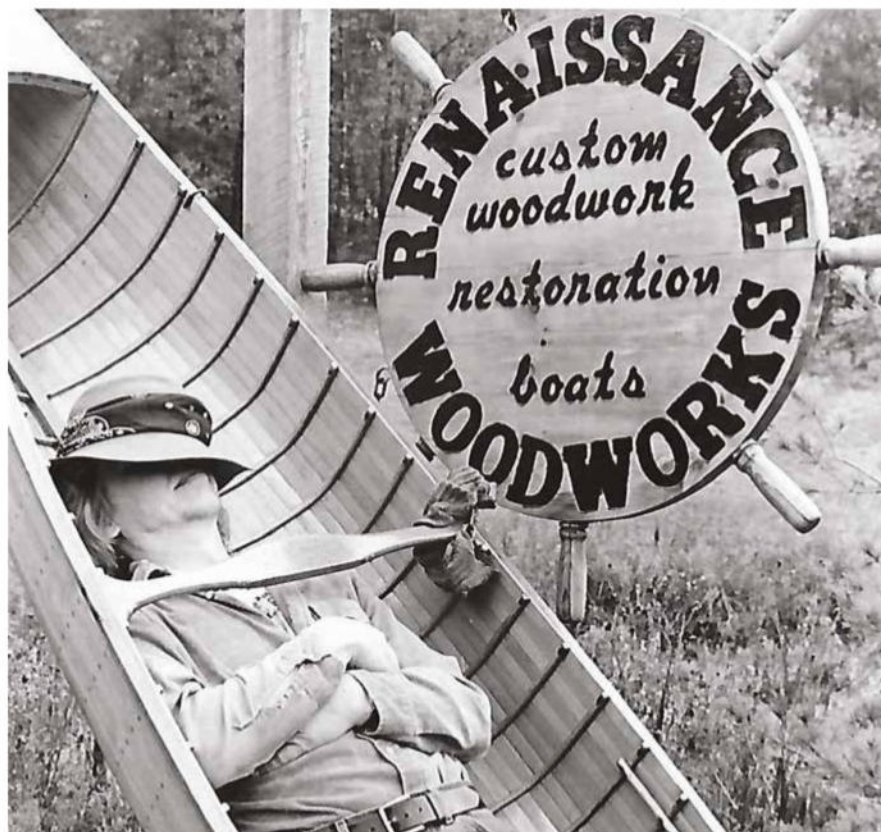
At the time, my mother was finishing a degree in psychology while working part-time as a waitress. My dad was a stay-at-home parent, and my brother and I spent a lot of time after school building wooden swords in the shop or watching my dad work.

He was a master woodworker. Other tradesmen would often visit his shop to absorb what knowledge they could. He trained several apprentices during his years in Keene, and one of his guideboats was featured on the cover of *National Geographic Traveler*.

He'd always have at least three boats in his woodshop, propped up on sawhorses. Sawdust blanketed the concrete floor, with larger patches throughout the shop from the floor-based power tools. The planer/jointer made cool sounds when the boards were put through, and my dad used it often. I felt like a part of it all when he'd let me take planks from the other end and hand them back to him, smooth with a fine coat of sawdust along their surfaces.

Two giant, rectangular windows sat along one side of the shop. Underneath them were two long workbenches packed with tools, and a giant vise at the end that I loved crushing things in. Planks and strips of wood and raw lumber were stationed throughout—the

Boatbuilder Carl Mancini at his Keene woodshop.



smell of cedar, ash, oak and mahogany filled the air.

If my father wasn't cutting, sanding or measuring, he was rolling around on his stool, making his way down a canoe, meticulously screwing strips of cedar plank into the ash ribs on the inside. Anything from Ray Lynch and Loreena McKennitt to John McCutcheon and Dire Straits would play on the stereo.

He had a dinged-up cabinet with shelves full of cans and jars packed with thousands of different kinds of nails, tacks and brass screws. A single comic from a magazine was taped to the front. In it, a giant pelican had an entire frog in its mouth, ready to swallow. The frog was squeezing the pelican's throat shut. The caption read, "Never give up."

The woodshop was my dad's happy place, and because of that, it became mine. I remember being asked by elementary schoolteachers, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

Answer: "I wanna be a boat builder."

Dad hand-built canoes and guide-boats, but he also restored them. Canvas boats were still popular and many customers brought them in for re-canvassing. Or he'd replace cracked or bashed ribs on a canoe that had hit a rock. Sometimes he'd just replace rotted ribs that time and nature hadn't been kind to.

An entire trailer with stacks of old canoes was parked outside the shop, with more boats lying around under cover, waiting for my dad's hand.

My brother and I would play in the shop or yard until my mother came home, and then we'd be together for the evening, cooking dinner, watching my dad make funny faces and my mom roll her eyes and smile. The only painful memory of those years was my dad's favorite dish, which he made every now and then: Mish Mosh. A combination of noodles, onions, peppers, strange-looking vegetables and anything else a little kid wouldn't find appealing.

But when I was nine years old, my mom and dad split up. The happy family in our home on the hill had crumbled. I moved to a town five miles away with my mom and brother. My dad stayed at the house by himself and slipped further



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into the bottle.

I visited my dad every Tuesday and Thursday after school and often witnessed his deterioration. I missed the days of family Christmases and camping trips in one of my dad's canoes. I even missed the Mish Mosh. Those years are hazy in my mind—snippets where I remember crying and not speaking a lot. Before the end of high school, my dad moved to Rochester, where my grandparents lived.

After I joined the Marine Corps, I would only see my father alive one last time. We did, however, play chess over the internet while I was posted in Lithuania. He'd set up his board at home and I'd set mine up across the world. We'd exchange our next move via email, with games lasting weeks.

I remember one time we were talking on the phone and I was feeling nostalgic, maybe even a little homesick. I said to my dad, "I decided when I get out of the Marines, I want to come live with you and learn how to build boats."

"That'd be great, Bub," he said.

He sent me a care package that included several "how-to" books on building wooden boats. My plan was set. All I had to do was get through three more years in the military.

Of course, things changed over those years. I met a girl in Lithuania and brought her back to my hometown for my mother's wedding. My father wanted to visit shortly after, but I remember saying we'd be too busy. I was afraid the alcohol still had him in its grip, and I didn't want to be embarrassed in front of my first love.

Later my brother and I went to visit Dad in Rochester. When we got there, we saw he wasn't doing well. He'd married a nice woman who had left him a couple of years earlier. It was just like old times. Not the good ones.

He was never an angry drunk, nor abusive. He loved my brother and me more than anything and he often told us so. But he was a sad drunk, consumed in pain. More and more he became a rem-

nant of a man who once had it all.

My brother and I decided it was time to go. Dad wasn't well, but there was nothing we could do to make him better. We were there with him, but he was just as alone as if we weren't. When we announced we were leaving and packed up, he slumped down onto the front step and began to cry, still inebriated.

I'd seen him in rough shape before—occasions where he wasn't coherent. But there was something different about this one. As he sat there, defeated and sobbing, it was the look in his eyes. I saw the realization that came through his stupor and tears, that his only two sons, who he hadn't seen in years, were leaving him.

It was the lowest I had ever seen him. And it was the last time I saw him alive.

I remember the phone call from my mother telling me he died. I had just spoken to him on the phone a week before, right after I moved to San Diego. He seemed to be doing OK, but it was often hard to know.

My plan on the West Coast had been

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to go to school and win back my Lithuanian girlfriend (which I never did). Now my desire for a new life in San Diego suddenly vanished. I wanted to be closer to family and my home, so I packed up and drove back to the Adirondacks.

Dad had left behind relics from the shop in Keene. There were boat moulds, a generator, all his tools, and other random stuff. There was only one real thing of meaning, the handmade sign for his business. It was a giant steering wheel, just like you'd imagine on an old pirate ship. Engraved in the center in large letters was his business name: Renaissance Woodworks.

He hung it from a pole and crossbeam at the bottom of our driveway, and each day he'd carry down a one-person canoe he'd built and lean it there, as part of his advertisement for the business.

At least we got the sign. Everything else was sold at an estate sale.

Before my brother and I became estranged, we had spoken several times about my father and his boats. We'd once

owned one of his smaller solo canoes, but it had been damaged and then shoddily repaired. It wasn't his best work because it had been built during one of his lowest times, after he moved to Rochester. So we decided to sell it, knowing that he still planned on making us each a boat when he got back on his feet.

After he died, those hopes were shattered. The damaged solo canoe was the only boat by him that we knew still existed, and we had sold it.

I said to my brother, "If you ever see that boat for sale somewhere, just buy it and we'll figure out the money situation later." He agreed. At whatever cost, we just wanted that boat back.

Fast-forward to mid-pandemic. It's my 11th year in New York City. I'm in my lonely Manhattan apartment when Lauren calls.

"What do you mean you have a boat in your garage with his name on it?"

"Well, my grandfather recently passed away and my family has been

going through his estate and we found this canoe with a brass plate on the front that says, 'Renaissance Woodworks,' then underneath says, 'Carl Mancini, Keene, NY.'"

"Holy shit ... send me pics!"

A few moments later I see a pristine boat with the familiar brass plate that was my father's signature.

"Lauren," I say. "I want to buy this boat from your family."

"Oh. OK, let me talk to my mom and see what she says."

She calls me back the next day and connects me with her mother, who loves the story about my father and his boat. I ask if I could buy it from her.

"Well, I have eight other siblings who technically the boat belongs to now as well, so let me check with them first."

Eight other siblings!

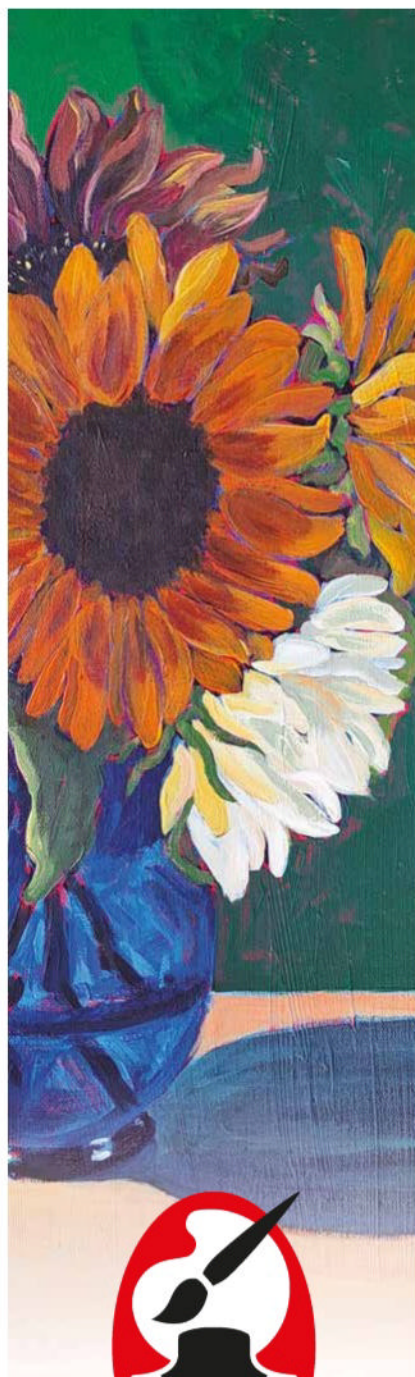
Convincing nine people to sell me a beautiful boat they just got for free is daunting. I'm prepared to drop some money, if they're even willing to let such a beautiful thing go.

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I offer to write an email that she can send to her siblings.

"Wonderful idea!" she says.

Two days later she calls back.

"Colter, all my family got together, and I read them your email and it was unanimous. We want to give you and your brother the boat. You even brought several of us to tears."

It's like finding a hidden treasure—one you thought didn't even really exist or was so far out of reach that it might as well have been impossible.

Now I'm nervous. My brother has to know. Despite our issues, this was his boat just as much as it was mine. It warrants breaking the silence.

I muster up the courage to call.

He answers, sounding apprehensive but surprisingly welcoming.

My heart is racing.

"Hey, man. So, listen, I know we have a lot to talk about, but we need to put that aside right now because I have something amazing to tell you."

He can't believe it. It voids all the other issues we had. We end up arranging a time to go and retrieve the boat. Our good friend, Matt, comes along because he wants to be part of it too, since he knew our father and remembered his work. The three of us rendezvous at Lauren's house in Lake George.

It's a sunny Adirondack day, and I'm giddy as I approach the garage. I turn the corner, and the 14-footer is resting on the concrete floor, varnish shimmering in the sunlight, accentuating cedar and ash patterns.

The wicker on the seats is in perfect condition, no rot, no wear. Every rib is intact and structurally sound, firmly holding in place dozens of thin strips of cedar that comprise the hull. Two perfect gunwales line the boat's exterior, leading up to the deck plate on the bow, where my father's brass plate signature is firmly attached.

Two slightly darker thwarts of a different wood hold each side of the canoe, with elegant curves that complement the overall aesthetic. My dad put in at least 1,500 tiny brass screws in lines down the hull that were drilled into the ribs inside for added structural integrity.

BARKEATER

To showcase his skill even more, each flat line of every flathead screw faces the same direction.

Two sets of paddles are inside the boat. One set can be attached together at the ends to paddle the boat like a kayak. The others are oars. I look at the center of the gunwales on each side to find the oar locks. This is my father's unique design—his “guide canoe.” It's a relatively narrow craft, fast, but not as stable as a traditional canoe. Though it would be hard to tip over in it, someone inexperienced might describe it as “tippy.”

But all these details are overpowered by what I feel at first sight.

My father's hands built this. He had touched and manipulated every part of this canoe. It's like the feeling after waking up from my dreams about him. I'm with him again.

This is some of his finest work, built at arguably the height of his career. He'd delivered it to Lauren's grandfather in 1995. He'd sold it to him for \$2,500. These days a canoe like this would go for more than \$10,000.

And here it is—a time machine. I caress its surface and feel the smooth finish. Lauren's grandfather had barely used it and kept it protected underneath a garage or structure of some kind.

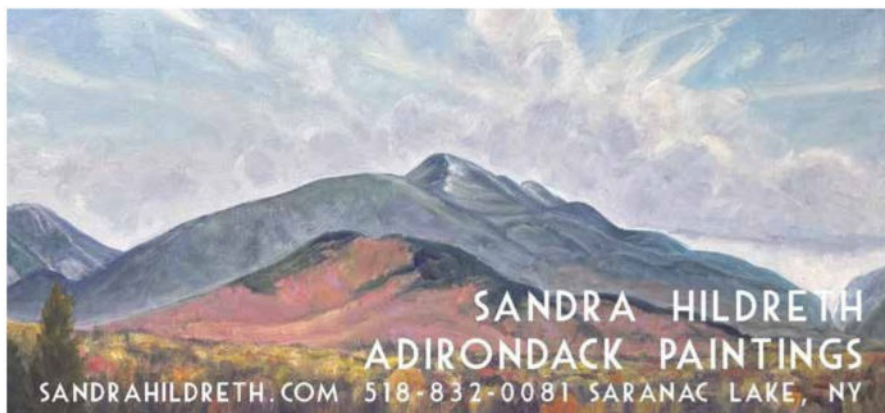
We load the boat on the roof of the car, give hugs to Lauren and her mother and thank them profusely, then head north.

I've taken the boat out on multiple ponds and lakes. It glides through the water. Anyone who sees it compliments it and asks about it. I simply say my father, Carl Mancini, built it in 1995.

To me, this boat is my father. Every part of him that was good was put into this work of art, and every time I look at it or take it out, I feel close to him. His skill with his hands remains in this artifact that connects me to that happy life, long in the past.

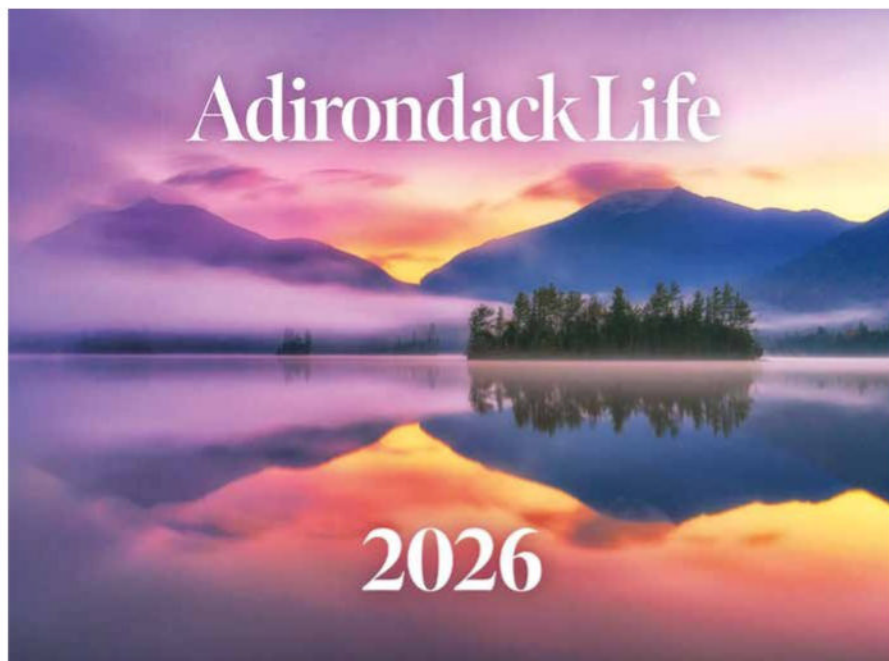
The last time I saw my dad he was at his worst, a broken man. It's a memory that has haunted me for a long time. This boat is his legacy. Now I see him again at his very best. ▲

See a picture of the rediscovered canoe at www.adirondacklife.com.



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EPIC LANDSCAPES

Continued from page 65

the lore. When he happens on a stash of never-published interviews with Germain's old friend and workmate, and a tell-all diary from a wealthy summer resident on Lake Aurora, we've all got what we need.

And so confident are the reports of Germain's exploits, a reader may be forgiven for forgetting that this is a novel, first to last. Lake Aurora isn't real. Germain's exchanges with the famous conservationist Bob Marshall are made up. Ditto the night he heard Irving Berlin at a bash in Saranac Lake. Or his work for Legs Diamond, hauling whiskey over iced-up logging roads on horse-drawn sleds.

But our author, once an Adirondack guide and an early editor of this magazine, reverences facts no less than fiction—and what Germain's example has to say about Adirondack social culture in the Depression is no tall tale. The Fran Germaines of an earlier age were honored not for ambition or monetary gain but for the self-taught versatility, range and independence that let them survive in the region on their terms. A vanished breed, we sigh. But no one's vanished. We just don't see them. And that's not their problem. It's our own. ▲

Amy Godine is an independent scholar and author of *The Black Woods: Pursuing Racial Justice on the Adirondack Frontier* (Cornell University Press, 2024). She's a long-time contributor to *Adirondack Life*, covering topics such as early Black settlers, immigrants, poverty and other hidden histories of the region.

Nip Rogers is an award-winning narrative painter, editorial illustrator and portrait artist from Lake Placid. His work has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Harvard Business Review* and *The New York Times*. You can see Rogers's paintings at Gallery 46, in Lake Placid, or at www.niprogers.com.

Interested in learning more about books set in the Adirondacks? See the Adirondack Center for Writing's Literary Map of the Adirondacks—"celebrating the intersection of writing and place within the park"—at www.adirondackcenterforwriting.org.

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